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The second of our summer specials sees an extended Scene It Before, the second part of Lady Flintlock and the first instalment of Milford Green. Hopefully you are enjoying us delve into comic strips in the pages of ComicScene and if the sales reflect that we intend to do more.

A big thank you to former group editor of IPC Magazine's Sport and Adventure Group Barrie Tomlinson for his personal articles on Blake Edwards in Death Wish and Hot Shot Hamish. Both characters have made a return recently in books from the Treasury of British Comics and in the new Roy of the Rovers from Rebellion. Barrie was group editor of the new Eagle in the 80's and the first of a two part retrospective starts this issue. That's written by Phillip Vaughn who presents our ComicScene Podcast. The Podcast is on a wee summer break at the moment so an ideal time to catch up with all eleven episodes at **www.soundcloud.com/ComicScene**, iTunes and Spotify.

Our 80 Years of Batman takes a break this Issue (apologies to Martin Dallard who we incorrectly credited as Stephen Jewell for last months look at the 1970's) but it is back next issue with a looks at Frank Millers Dark Knight and the Batman Movie. Look out for the Batman cover too - designed by one of our lucky readers!

We hope you enjoy ComicScene and if you are **please consider subscribing at www.getmycomics.com/ComicScene** - you will get a free digital copy with your print subscription, only £5.50 delivered direct to your door for 12 issues or if digital is your bag £2.50 an issue for 12 issues... A bargain!

Yours aye, Tony.

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THAT'S THE LOT READY -NOW WE CAN PUT OUR PLAN INTO OPERATION!
OH-OH! THAT'S GRIMLY FEENDISH'S VOICE!
KOZA & MOUSSE
LA RÉVOLTE DES TERRES
casterman

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When I launched Speed comic in 1980, I wanted a variety of stories based on the speed theme. The line-up was Topps on Two Wheels (Stunt rider), Quick on the Draw (Western), Journey to the Stars (fast moving space adventure), The £1,000,000 Challenge (Speed stunt reader participation), Speedboy (Boy devoted to record breaking), Baker's Half-Dozen (Fast moving Sergeant Baker), The Fastest Footballer on Earth (Speedy soccer star) … and Death Wish (Blake Edmonds, King of Speed).

I think it was a strong cast of characters but the one character that is remembered most and has proved worthy of a reappearance in 2019 is Blake Edmonds and the Death Wish story.

As editor, I decided to write the Death Wish story myself. I had already written lots of scripts for the comics in my group and they had been popular. I always studied the popularity charts of the stories and if any story I wrote showed any signs of being unpopular, I would scrap that story right away. Fortunately, that never happened so I felt confident that I could produce a successful story on the Death Wish theme. I was right, and the story was popular first in Speed, then in Tiger and finally in Eagle. That's a long run for one story. How did I know what was popular and what wasn't? Each time the readers wrote to us, we asked them to name their two favourite stories. I kept a graph of the results, week by week, and I could always tell which story was popular as a result of any single instalment. When Speed merged into Tiger, Death Wish was a one of the most popular stories and made the transfer. It was the same when Tiger merged with Eagle. Death Wish was again high in the charts and was part of the merged comic.

Let's go back to the start. The first script I wrote introduced Blake Edmonds, a former World Motor Racing Champion, still a king of speed and one of the great superstars of British sport. He was competing in the greatest speed race in history. Competitors would be starting their race from the top of a tower block, hang gliding down, then getting into racing cars, followed by helicopters and then into single-engine aircraft.

All went well for Blake and he was leading the race. But suddenly his aircraft had engine trouble and it crashed into trees. The crash was followed by fire. Blake was trapped and received terrible injuries.

Such were the injuries to his face, that Blake decided he would from then on wear a mask to hide the damage to his face.

He vowed to carry on tackling the toughest challenges he could find. People looked at what he was doing and thought he had a death wish.

Hence the story's title. Did Blake have a death wish? He did take enormous risks when tackling some of the dangerous challenges. I left it to the reader to decide if Blake did really have that death wish.

“Such were the injuries to his face, that **Blake decided he would from then on wear a mask** to hide the damage to his face.”

Death Wish was a hard hitting story. I felt that the readership could cope with the gruesome contents and sure enough we had no complaints about the storyline.

Back to the start again. I had a script and now I had to find an artist. Who was available? I jumped at the opportunity when I found Vanyo was free to take on the story. "Vanyo" is the name of two artists, Eduardo Vano Ibarra and Vicente Vano Ibarra. I never met either of these artists. At IPC Magazines an executive was employed to deal with all the foreign artists. Us humble editorial folk had no contact with the artists. The executive did all the flying around meeting the contributors and arranging what the editor wanted. I really regret not meeting them. All I do know is that the Death Wish artwork was of the very highest standard and the artist, or artists, interpreted my script really well and I soon got to know what they liked drawing and write my script accordingly.

I think we made a good team!

During the time Death Wish appeared, I had to keep readers interested the whole time. One change I made was to have someone share Blake's adventures. I introduced a girl into the story, Suzie Walsh. It was still a bit revolutionary to have a girl in a boys' comic but it is something I encouraged. We had Tallon of the Track in Tiger and later Kitten Magee in Wildcat. That all seemed to work. In Death Wish, Blake was by now more of an adventurer. His stories were still full of action as before but the concept of the story had changed a bit.

There were even bigger changes when the story went into Eagle. Films such as Ghostbusters were very popular and I thought it would be fun if Blake got involved in a supernatural world, not in a Scream sort of way but in a humorous way. The Vanyo artwork continued to be excellent as the artists took the changes in their stride, continuing to produce excellent drawings.

At one point in his history, I even had Blake Edmonds and Suzie facing the might of Dracula. Things had gone a long way since Blake appeared in that first issue of Speed!

It's strange but I can clearly remember the Death Wish stories I wrote in Speed and in Tiger. The later ones, in Eagle, seem to have almost vanished from my memory. Is this because I think the early stories are better? Maybe that's what I feel, in a sub conscious way. I do know it was great fun writing all those Blake Edmonds instalments and I am delighted that folk still remember the story and that it is being reprinted by Rebellion.

I hope all the former readers, and some new ones, become 2019 fans of Blake Edmonds and his Death Wish adventures!

I hope folk enjoy reading the story as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Author: Barrie Tomlinson | **Twitter:** @BarrieEditor1

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GRIMLY FEENDISH

THE ROTTENEST CROOK IN THE WORLD

The long and spectacular criminal career of Grimly Feendish began in June 1964. He was a villain in Eagle Eye Junior Spy – the long-running strip created by Leo Baxendale for WHAM! comic. In his book A VERY FUNNY BUSINESS, Leo Baxendale admits that the character came out looking 'vaguely like the uncle in the Chas Addams family', but in fact the external resemblance was more than vague.

In Eagle Eye Junior Spy, Grimly Feendish was the sinister proprietor of Doomsday Holiday Camp, the inventor of atomic treacle, and a criminal mastermind whose ambition was to seize power in Britain and conquer the world, unless he got paid an ungodly amount in gold. Aided by his gang of henchmen and henchthings, the arch-crook fought a relentless war with the young MI5½ agent Eagle Eye – assistant unpaid temporary junior spy, who never grew tired of putting himself in grave danger to foil Grimly's evil plots such as turning the world into raspberry jelly, robbing a cruise ship carrying 50 millionaires, blowing up the world with his explosive haggises, breeding atomic toadstools, shooting down airliners with giant icicles, building a giant robot to break into banks, or growing an army of man-eating melons. Eagle Eye also faced an array of other evildoers such as a robot Hitler and his Nazis, Jimmy Slobber the crooked disc jockey, Purple Pimple, Dirty Dick Turpentine and others. Although Grimly didn't feature in those stories, he sometimes proved to be the mastermind behind the plots, or at least an inspiration for the other villains to pursue their evil ends.

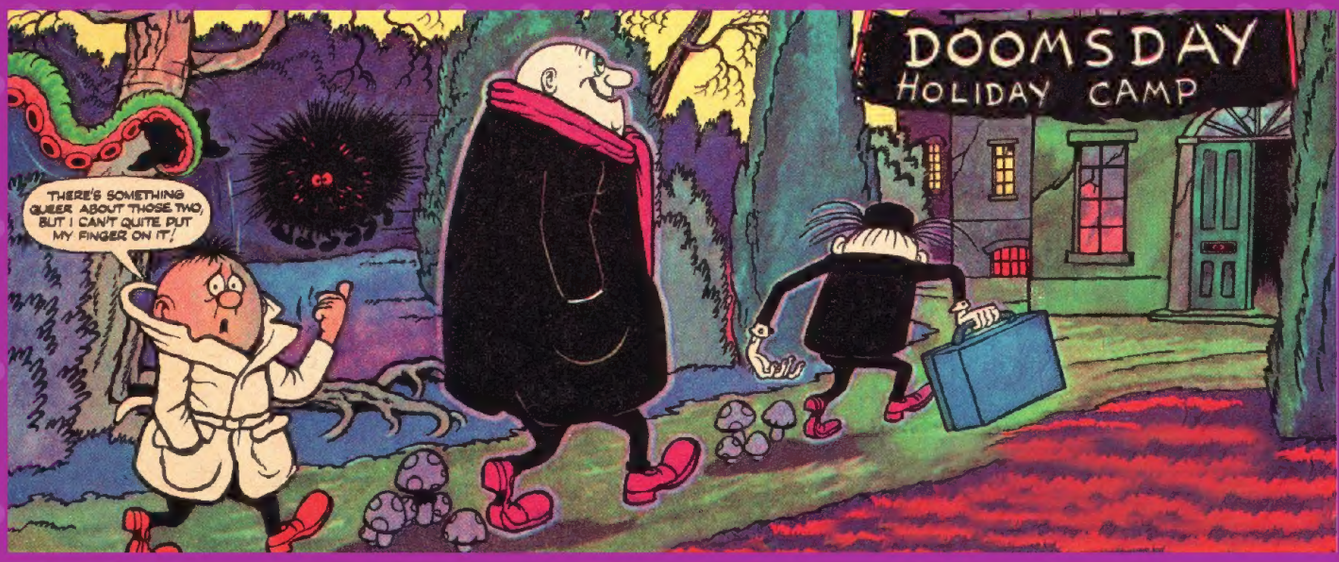
Grimly Feendish first appeared in the very first issue of WHAM! and was last seen in the penultimate edition of the paper (No. 186 dated 13 January, 1968) in which Eagle Eye stopped Grimly's diabolical Christmas Day plot of substituting explosives for Christmas puds on tables in every home in Britain.

Interestingly, less than two years before the end of the strip in WHAM! Grimly Feendish got his own weekly feature in another Power Comic – SMASH! In SMASH! the criminal ambitions of Grimly Feendish – the Rottenest Crook in the World – had shrunk considerably and had now become limited to stealing and robbing. Crimes of this category fell outside the competence of intelligence services, but Grimly made new enemies in law enforcement – the police. In addition to the squelchy things familiar to readers of WHAM!, he acquired a small pack of eager young students, including the Headless Wonder – a lad who followed his boss around, towing his detached head on a small cart...

Grimly Feendish ran in SMASH! issues No. 1 – 162 (5 February, 1966 – 8 March, 1969 [the last pre-revamp issue]) and then disappeared off the radar.

He resurfaced three and a half years later in IPC's SHIVER AND SHAKE No. 22 cover-dated 4 August, 1973, and became a regular feature in the SHIVER section of the paper. The reincarnated Grimly was the thieving and robbing version from SMASH!, rather than the sinister mastermind with world-domination ambitions from WHAM! In SHIVER AND SHAKE, Grimly Feendish picked up where he'd left off in SMASH! and continued with daring crime schemes, assisted by Squelch and company. Although his life's ambition was to rob the Bank of England, it wasn't uncommon for Grimly to raid a candy store or try to swindle old folks out of their pensions. In SHIVER AND SHAKE issue No. 24, Grimly Feendish showed up in The Shiver Givers strip, and hit a new low by pinching a rubber from Frankie Stein and a type-writer from Shiver.

The SHIVER AND SHAKE run of Grimly Feendish started with eleven reprints of old episodes from SMASH!, and then at



the end of the run, from issue 34, illustrator's duties were handed-over to the young Tom Paterson who was just starting his career in comics. Tom's style was hardly recognisable at that stage, but gradually evolved into something more familiar as weeks went by. The artist even signed a couple of episodes towards the end of the run. Trivia buffs might be interested to know that Tom Paterson's trademark striped upright sock was first seen on the side of the turret of Grimly's tank in SHIVER AND SHAKE No. 49.

Grimly Feendish didn't survive the merger with WHOOPEE!, so the last episode in SHIVER AND SHAKE marked the sad end of his long and dramatic criminal career which saw his transformation from a mastermind of the underworld to a petty thief.

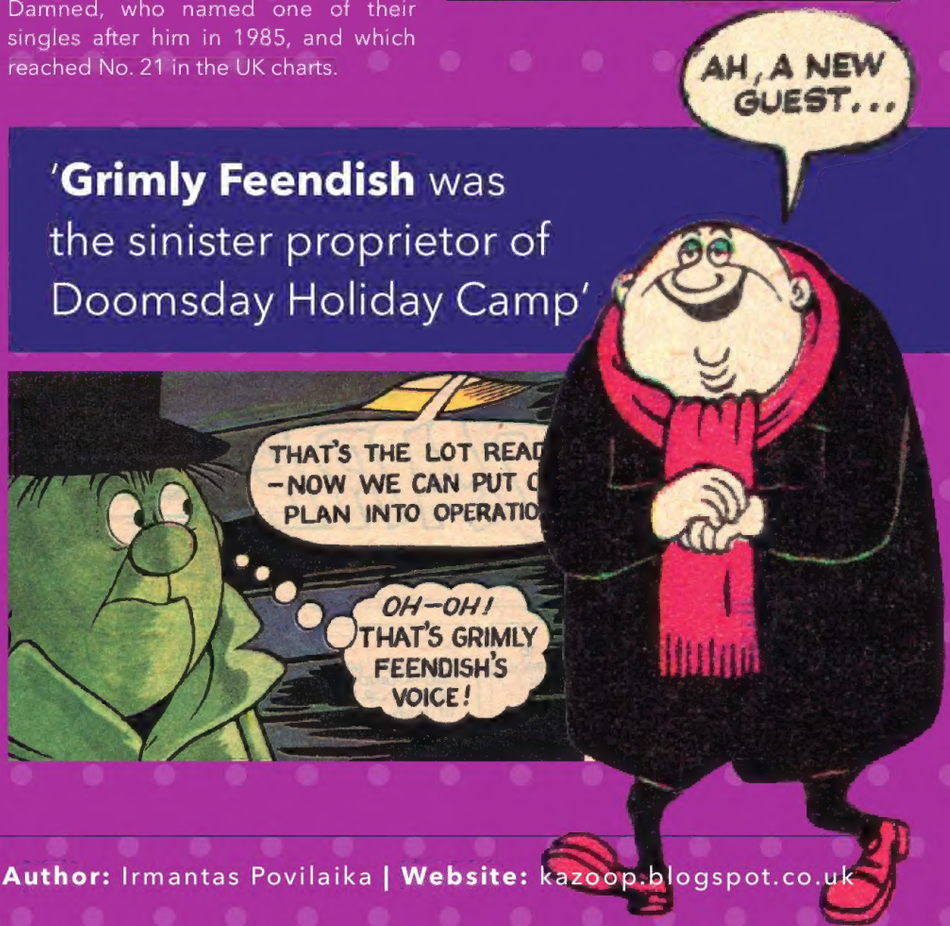
The editors gave the strip another chance by entering it in the Pick-A-Strip readers' poll in WHOOPEE! AND SHIVER & SHAKE where a total of eight strips competed for a regular slot in the new combined comic. Grimly didn't make it – young voters picked Sweeny Toddler as the winner, while Grimly only came in at sixth place in the poll.

Grimly continued in SHIVER AND SHAKE annuals and holiday specials for quite a while and made his final appearance in the 1986 Annual, drawn beautifully by Martin Baxendale, the son of the character's creator and original artist. The scene of the last episode is set at the Police College where students are watching a video film captured from Grimly Feendish documenting his various crimes, sneakiness and mastery of disguise. Grimly shows up dressed up as a video repair man and steals his tape back, along with the TV and the video player, only to find out that the laugh's on him…

Afterwards Grimly was seen just one more time in the ALBION series published by Wildstorm in 2005, and it's great to see that Tom Paterson has contributed a brand new episode in the COR!!! BUSTER HUMOUR SPECIAL recently published by Rebellion.

Grimly Feendish must have been fondly remembered by many, including members of the London rock band The Damned, who named one of their singles after him in 1985, and which reached No. 21 in the UK charts.

'Grimly Feendish was the sinister proprietor of Doomsday Holiday Camp'



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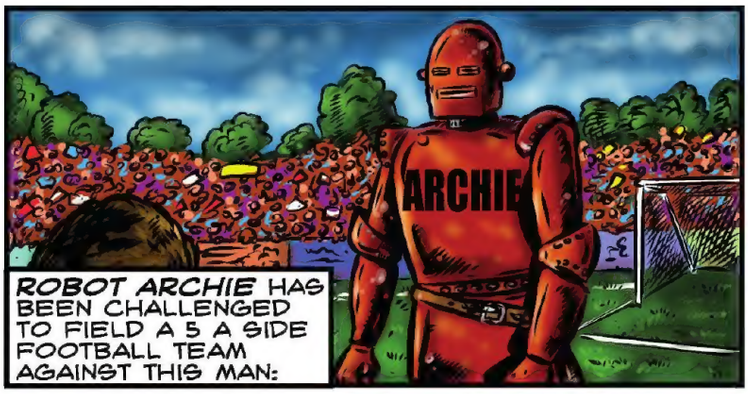
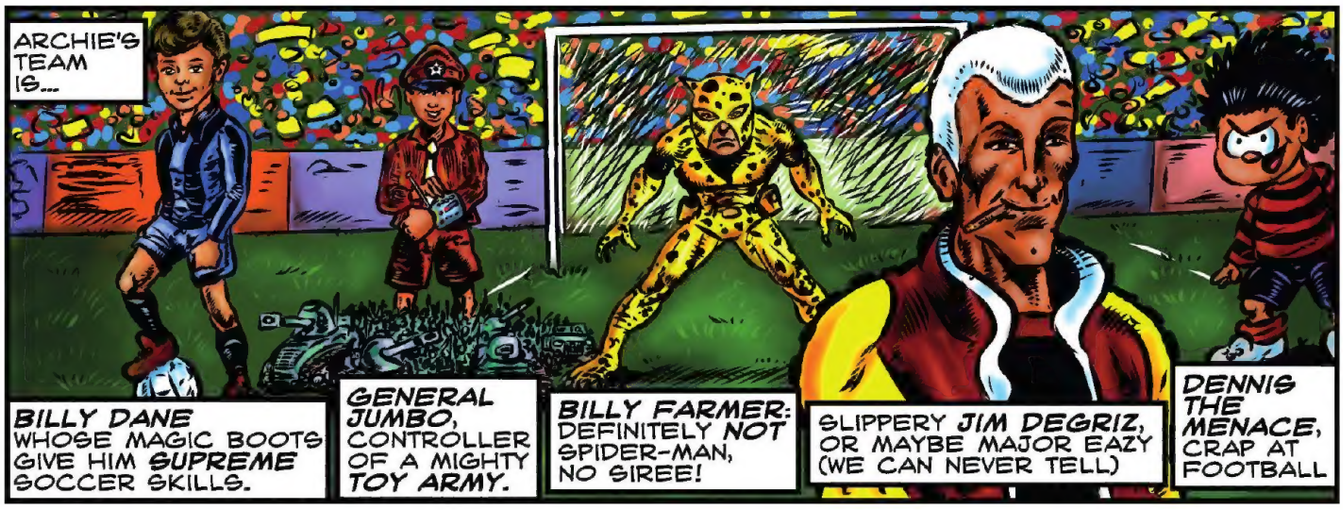
SCENE IT BEFORE

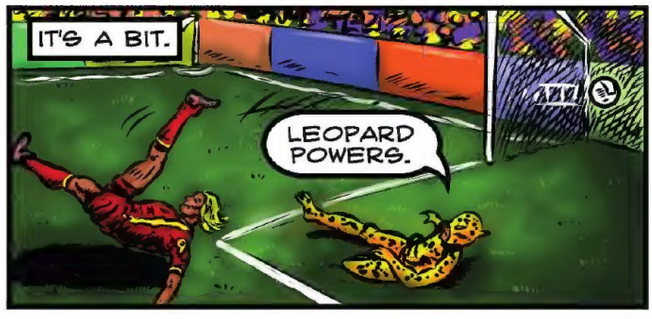
PART ONE

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

SCRIPT: ALAN HOLLOWAY
ART: ED DOYLE




ARCHIE'S TEAM IS...
BILLY DANE WHOSE MAGIC BOOTS GIVE HIM SUPREME SOCCER SKILLS.
GENERAL JUMBO, CONTROLLER OF A MIGHTY TOY ARMY.
BILLY FARMER: DEFINITELY NOT SPIDER-MAN, NO SIREE!
SLIPPERY JIM DEGRIZ, OR MAYBE MAJOR EAZY (WE CAN NEVER TELL)
DENNIS THE MENACE, CRAP AT FOOTBALL



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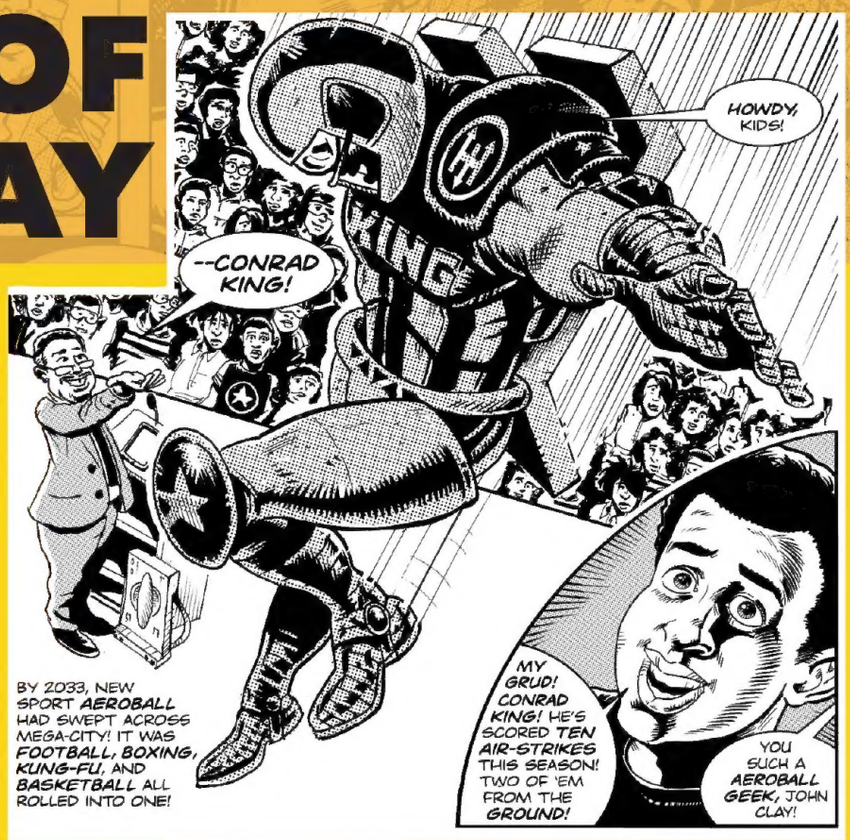
HARLEM HEROES

FEAT OF CLAY


HOWDY, KIDS!
--CONRAD KING!
BY 2033, NEW SPORT AEROBALL HAD SWEPT ACROSS MEGA-CITY! IT WAS FOOTBALL, BOXING, KUNG-FU, AND BASKETBALL ALL ROLLED INTO ONE!
MY GRUD! CONRAD KING! HE'S SCORED TEN AIR-STRIKES THIS SEASON! TWO OF 'EM FROM THE GROUND!
YOU SUCH A AEROBALL GEEK, JOHN CLAY!

They nickname it Toothy nowadays. But nobody called it Toothy back then. Hell, no - this brute of a comic with a futuristic year for a name ("a future - YOU will be living in") would've bitten your head clean off then spit out the drokkin' cowboy hat if you didn't call him by his full and proper name, the name his mother Pat Mills gave him – 2000A.D. Toothy, my ass. It's Mister 2000A.D. to you, punk! Everyone and his uncle has their favourite character now - Joe, Sláine, Johnny, Rogue - but back in the late seventies when the world was a far greyer place, nobody had heard of them. Back then, they had yet to be fully drawn forth from the green matter of Tharg's mighty brain. These days, they're everywhere. Dredd has even had two movies of varying quality made about him as well as a yet to be made TV series. Duncan Jones recently announced he was directing a Rogue Trooper film. Stak! But my own favourite character was not among these illustrious stars of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic and this is the story of why that is and what I've done about it...

Killean, South Armagh. February, 1977A.D.

There were three channels on telly back in the seventies, only one of which showed advertisements. New ads for products were quite rare which is why I have no trouble at all recalling the jingle for a block of cooking fat used for making pastry to this day ("Give 'em a lift...mmmm-mmm...with Cookeen!") because they were repeated over and over. (Maybe they could call this syndrome "ad" nauseam.) So when a new advert came on, it was assimilated into the juvenile zeitgeist with a ferocity you'd expect from entertainment-starved kids all over the British Isles. "If you liiiiike a lottaaaaa choc-lit on your biskit" and "I want a Trio and I want one now" became mini-classics in playgrounds everywhere.

But there was one commercial that lasted all too briefly, like a moderately-priced firework that arced spectacularly upwards and erupted in the darkness of the 1970s pop-culture sky before fizzling down to earth. In it, some cartoon alien bloke with funny hair called Farg wanted to sell me a comic with adventures from the future called Two-Something Ay-Dee. I read all kinds of comics at age seven (with just three bloody channels, who didn't?!) and this one sounded pretty good, with a "new invisible Dand Hare". But I didn't care about the content – I just wanted the piece of circular red plastic that came with it. The – what did that alien fella call it – Fargian Space Spinner. The comic cost 8p, though – a bit rich for my blood, but I begged my sister to buy it for me that Saturday when she was next in town which was four miles away. Might as well be Pluto. "What do you call it again?" my sister asked. "Two Hundred Ay-Dee," I replied. "It's got a Fargian Space Spinner on the front," I added, just in case she confused it with any other brand-new numerically-titled sci-fi comics that happened to be on the newsagent shelf.

My sister always got the five o'clock bus home on a Saturday, but I was seven and couldn't read time properly yet - I went by what was on telly. Dicky Davies was still blathering away on World of Sport. Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks hadn't even come on yet. This wasn't good. The wait for that Fargian Space Spinner to make its way to me felt like the hands of the clock on the mantelpiece were pulling against the quantum might of a black hole. Were those clock hands actually moving backwards now?!? To add to the torture, the advert for the "galack-kick new comic" came on a couple of times. The real horror show would begin if the newsagent had sold out, which often

happened with free gift-laden comics in the seventies. My mind began to sweat.

To relieve the pain, I planned my Saturday evening: I knew my sister would be home about halfway into the Adam West Batman TV show (enjoying repeats on ITV at the time and a big favourite of mine). I'd have to just hold and occasionally look at my new Fargian Space Spinner, while the last half hour of Batman finished, then I could skip Popeye (no big loss) while I went outside to play with it. It would be getting dark by then, but surely a Fargian Space Spinner would somehow still be visible at night due to some hitherto unimagined alien technology? I could live without watching New Faces and I may even have to give up Celebrity Squares if I wanted the full Fargian Space Spinner experience. But

I definitely wasn't missing that James Bond film, the one they'd been advertising all week where he has a jet-pack. No way, José. If I whined hard enough, I might be allowed to watch right to the end, and get to the part where Bond plays with a girl under some blankets.

My poor sister, bent double from carrying shopping bags and with cheeks as red as a Fargian Space Spinner, finally made it home just as Adam West and Burt Ward were launching into their BIFF! TWAK! POW! fisticuffs routine and was leapt upon with all the savagery of a cartoon tiger upon a small, spiky-haired cartoon boy.

"Did you get me Two Hundred Ay-Dee? Did you get it? DID YOU?!?"

"No," my sister said.

Rip out my still-beating heart, why don't you? Rip it out, throw it onto broken glass, stomp on it then feed it to me, you rotten bitch.

"It's called Two Thousand Ay-Dee," she said.

Smiling, she pulled it out from between a family pack of mint Club biscuits and a tin of Fray Bentos and thrust it into my sweaty seven-year-old hands...changing my life forever.

Because after I'd ripped that Fargian Space Spinner from the garish front cover with a cool red and yellow logo with – count 'em – one, two, three noughts – and leaving a big hole in the paper where the Sellotape was and went outside and played with it and lost it in my neighbour's guttering after a total of forty-seven seconds and went back inside, utterly crestfallen, to catch the tail-end of Popeye, all of New Faces, all of Celebrity Squares and most of Thunderball (up to the part where he flew with that jet-pack as I wasn't allowed to watch the bit where he swaps Spangles with the girl) and climbed into bed, I realised I hadn't even read any of the damn comic. Puff! Pant! I had rolled it up and stuffed it in the back pocket of my jeans shortly after I'd mutilated the front cover. I dashed across the cold lino floor, snatched it out of my jeans pocket, ran back to bed, then unfurled it on top of of the candlewick bedspread.

I have a peculiar habit, which has stayed with me throughout life and is probably due to my left-handedness, of flicking through a magazine or comic starting at the back and scanning the contents before reading it properly. So Pat Mills's undoubted fastidiousness with regard to

which story was read first was completely lost on me. My introduction to the Galaxy's Greatest Comic, after the Fargian Space Spinner affair (please don't bring it up again, it still upsets me), wasn't Bill Savage or Earl Reagan or Dan Dare or John Probe – it was a brain in a jar called Louis. ("HELLO FELLAS! SORRY I CAN'T SHAKE YOU BY THE HAND.")

But how did poor Louis Mayer 555 end up in that predicament? Turning the pages backwards, I saw there was a big crash ("HEY, THAT FEELS LIKE THE ROAD WE'RE SCRAPIN' ALONG") and Louis, who'd been driving a hover-powered 'road-liner', had been badly injured. (DUH! His brain's in a jar!) My widening eyes scanned the preceding page to take in what looked like an American football game in progress, but with the additional thrill of powered flight added to the mix! Except these slimline jet-packs made Sean Connery's look like a miniature oil refinery. ("D-DARNED EXHAUST NEARLY ROASTED US!") On the page before that, more future-sport excitement. One guy gets punched in the face but the ref lets them play on! ("EUGH!") You didn't see that in too many football games. On the terraces maybe, but not on the field! Then a brief, one-panel explanation of the rules followed by the coolest splash page of a character called Giant – according to the foot-high block capitals on his chest – shoulder-charging an opposing player ("UUUULGH!") and scoring his seventh "air-strike" for a team called the Harlem Heroes. And bonus – Giant looked just like one of my favourite superheroes, Captain America, adorned in similar star-spangled banner garb. I read the whole story again, from the start this time, then read it again. And again. I read the other stories as well, of course, but only after I knew the Harlem Heroes's dialogue by heart. ("IT'S FOOTBALL, BOXING, KUNG FU AND BASKETBALL ALL ROLLED INTO ONE!") Don't get me wrong – I loved all the other stuff too – M.A.C.H. 1, the second story I read after HH (his incredible hyper-power really did amaze me!) even had my birthdate mentioned in it and The Six Million Dollar Man on which it was based was essential 70s viewing. There was a page introducing Tharg and his cunningly disguised space-ship. (Oh. Tharg. It was a Thargian Space Spinner, I see.) And a cool pic of someone I'd meet next week called Judge Dredd. Dan Dare was visually stunning if a little weird for my tastes. Flesh rocked – it had cowboys and dinosaurs in it, like one or the other on its own wasn't enough. And Invasion looked good and scary. But because that thrilling aeroball game was the first thing I saw in 2000A.D., it imprinted itself on my consciousness like I was a recently-hatched chick. Harlem Heroes was my momma now.

On the following Saturdays, after taking in my weekly hit of thrill-power, I'd zoom outside to my own personal "thrill-bowl" with my football, which I sorely wished was a helium-filled silver sphere, and I'd score "air-strikes", not goals. I'd "rebound it off the starboard pad" (i.e. bounce it off a kerb) and perform fifty-mile an hour punches. However, I was always careful not to deliver kicks to the back of the neck of my invisible opponents, not because that would've really hurt, but because it was against the rules. (Aeroball had loads of rules. For instance, rule 59 stated that "computronic players must reduce their energy output to human levels during the game." Cooool!) Even not being in possession of a jet-pack (controlled by buttons on my belt) was no obstacle to a small boy determined to play the most dangerous game in the world – a loud whooshing noise did the exact same job.

And Artie Gruber. Brrrrr. Had comics ever had an eviller bad guy than that disfigured flat-top cyborg who talked like a cheap hood? He'd been badly injured in a game against the Heroes AND he cost two million dollars more to rebuild than Colonel Steve Austin. This ugly bug-eyed weirdo returned again and again to plague the Heroes and his hatred for Giant burned fiercer than the heart of a neutron star. Despite his obvious evil charms, Gruber was not the reason I loved the story so much, nor was the game of aeroball. It was Giant himself.

Giant fascinated me. He was powerfully built. His leadership skills were undisputed, his moral fibre implacable. He appeared to me to be a good man, albeit one who seemed to care overmuch about aeroball. (He once scored an air-strike whilst plummeting to apparent doom after his jet-pack malfunctioned.) He had no life beyond that violent, wonderful sport that he was created for. Even when he wasn't wearing his monikered fire-proof body sheath, his nickname (for his real name, like mine, was John and his surname was that of another sporting hero of the seven-year-old me, Cassius Clay aka Muhammad Ali) was emblazoned across a tight-fitting black t-shirt. His only friends were his teammates and a disembodied brain. He never switched off. Whatever private life he had was locked behind an impenetrable façade of sports-jock machismo.

Then came that Judge Dredd episode which appeared in prog 27 alongside the still-running Harlem Heroes storyline, where Giant as an old man cameoed as the father of a rookie judge on his final assessment. Here was some of the character's private life I'd been missing, perhaps. If he had a son, he must've had a wife and other family though there was no mention of them. My little heart broke when newly appointed Judge Giant walked away from his proud pappy after the old man suggested having a party to celebrate his son's graduation. Inferno, HH's ultra-violent sequel, also failed to give any glimpse behind the G-man's stoical veneer. Worse yet, in a tale that ran in the Judge Dredd Megazine years later, they unceremoniously killed him off without so much as by-your-leave. I felt Giant Snr. as a character had been severely short-changed.

I grew up. The calendar pages dropped off like you used to see in movies to suggest the passage of time but you don't see any more. I didn't play as much aeroball, but I re-read Harlem Heroes often, particularly the first five episodes which seemed more realistic to me than the bat-shit crazy stuff that came after. The Dave Gibbons art was fantastic, showcasing the solid anatomy and dramatic lighting the artist is famous for. Tom Tully's scripts rattled along like 80mph drop-kicks. I got to thinking about John Clay the man, not Giant the aeroball player. How did he come by that nickname anyhow? He mentioned he was discovered in the "sky-slums of Harlem." What the heck were they? He seemed to have a bee in his helmet about street-punk Zack Harper and giving him a chance to shine. Why was that? He must've known Artie Gruber before his little accident because he said he recognised his voice. I figured there was definitely a story here, a chance to put things right with regards to this enigmatic character's past. In short, I wanted to do me a prequel with the boyhood of John Clay at its centre and his rise to fame as aeroball's premier player.

I wanted it to be more "kitchen sink" than the later episodes of HH had been. As kitchen sink as a story featuring jet-packs can be, anyhow. I wanted to answer those questions that niggled me, whilst also respecting the source material. There was only one place where I could do this and that was the 2000A.D. fanzine, Zarjaz. I contacted editor Dave Evans and pitched the idea to him, having done a Harlem Heroes story called Three Giants for Zarjaz's first incarnation way back in 2003.

Originally I told Dave the story would be a two-parter, then three, then four then six as the story swelled into being in my mind. Patiently, Dave pandered to me but drew the line when I suggested seven episodes. "Just keep it to six," he said with cool understatement. It meant tighter writing on my part, but I managed to keep the final page count to 38, spread across three issues of Zarjaz, beginning in July 2019, just 12 years before the first episode is set. Dave doesn't usually allow multi-part stories in his fanzine and to his credit he has indulged me greatly. But I think that's because he saw good things in the story of a juvenile John Clay, harried by his existence in a slum section of a proto Mega-City One where the judges have just seized power. Either that, or Dave's a right sucker.

The story's not only about aeroball and a slum kid's fascination with the sport, nor his brave attempts at escaping the stresses of a tough home life. I tried to give it more mythological weight than that. For instance, John Clay wears a pentagram on all his clothing, not simply to foreshadow his star-spangled sporting attire that he would don later in his life, but to imbue him with the magical power of everything that occult symbol represents. His brother's gang name is Nebuchadnezzar who was a Babylonian King who dreamed of crumbling empires represented by a statue with feet of clay. In one point in the story there is a literal and symbolic "magical flight" as described in Joseph Campbell's The Hero With a Thousand Faces as well as an "atonement with the father".

Basically, I've tried to give Giant the mythos he deserves. His own heroic journey. At the same time, I've attempted to answer some of the questions I'd asked myself about the character through the years. Tie up a few loose ends, but also have fun playing in the Harlem Heroes sandbox. Discover what a pre-messed up Artie Gruber might be like, for instance. It's taken up quite a lot of my free time, but I've loved every second of it. It seems almost like the seven-year-old me and the 49-year-old me are reaching out through time towards each other and connecting. Closing a circle. Making a new Fargian Space Spinner, if you will, and letting it soar again. This time, however, I won't lose it in my neighbour's gruddamn gutter!

The 100% unofficial prequel to Harlem Heroes, Giant: Feat of Clay by John Farrelly will appear in Zarjaz issues 34, 35 and 36 available from FutureQuake Press at www.futurequake.co.uk

Harlem Heroes created by Pat Mills, Tom Tully and Dave Gibbons © Rebellion

Author: John Farrelly
Website: www.captainwonder.com

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THE VIGILANT LEGACY

Ranging from the Leopard from Lime Street to Adam Eterno and Pete's Pocket Army, last year's The Vigilant brought together numerous characters from Fleetway's rich and plentiful archive of 1970s British comic books. Now Rebellion are releasing are releasing a much-anticipated follow-up in the form of The Vigilant: Legacy, which is once again written by Simon Furman and drawn by Simon Coleby, who on this occasion is joined on art chores by Will Sliney and Jake Lynch.

"I was very pleased with the way that The Vigilant turned out," says Keith Richardson, who oversees Rebellion's Treasury of British Comics imprint. "We got to see some of the coolest characters from British boy's comics return from limbo, and we got lashings of action and superheroics. Some people have accused it of being a little dense, but I think that we just offered good value for money, and the two Simons did a great job."

"I felt we'd successfully navigated that tricky line between creating something new with its own narrative integrity and keeping readers who'd grown up with The Leopard, the Steel Commando, et al from wanting to string us up," adds Furman. "It looked modern and fit for purpose and yet it stayed true to the heart and soul of the original characters. My one regret was we didn't have enough pages to really introduce – or re-introduce – the characters properly. The first issue moves at such a helter-skelter pace, they're in uniform and in action virtually the whole time, and so we don't really get the chance to go 'behind the mask.' But that's something we've put right in The Vigilant: Legacy."

Indeed the fact that The Vigilant was originally intended to be a three-issue mini-series before being scaled back to a one-shot can't have helped its rather jam-packed narrative. "There are continuing over-arching strands, such as The Blood Rapture, that run through not simply the Vigilant comics but also some of the characters' earliest modern appearances, such in the first Scream and Misty Special, for example," explains Furman, referring to Keith Richardson and Henry Flint's Death-Man in which the newly created character was recruited into the ranks of The Vigilant, although it wasn't called that at the time. "But each issue is a self-contained story and just part of a larger epic in the making, which is evolving constantly, as Rebellion's acquisition earlier this year of the full IPC/

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Fleetway archive meant that we suddenly had the capacity to involve other classic characters in the mix."

With many of the characters in the inaugural Vigilant at least dating back to 1970 – or 1965 in the case of former Buster stalwart Thunderbolt the Avenger – some of them have naturally had to be updated for contemporary times. "Most of the changes are just aesthetic," says Richardson. "The Leopard couldn't run around in a onesie and be taken seriously by a large proportion of the readers, and the little aliens from Pete's Pocket Army looked a little too hokey while we wanted the Steel Commando to be a more imposing figure. Fortunately, Simon Coleby had the right sensibilities to update these characters and make them a lot cooler. I liked the original concept of Thunderbolt the Avenger, but the original character was a little bit bland, so I asked if our Thunderbolt could be female to add a bit of diversity to the team, but not completely write the original character out of existence. These are all great characters, so they didn't require a lot of re-working."

Furman was determined to strike the perfect balance between the old and new eras. "If there's a tension, it's a good tension, that forces us to both shake the characters up and give them a good 21st Century coat of paint and still remain true to the fundamental nature of the characters themselves, which is something we never wanted to tamper with," he reasons. "Apart from anything, I grew up with them too, so I'm keen to write those exact characters and not reinvent the wheel. But that doesn't stop us putting a modern spin on them, as the last thing we want is for The Vigilant to look anachronistic. We've enough new characters – or just next generation characters like Doctor Sin – to not have to remake the more classic characters overmuch. But they're all still very much of today – and so reflect what is going on both in terms of the modern world and the issues affecting people now."

Legacy opens not long after The Vigilant left off. "We learn a little more about what Von Hoffman and his villainous crew are up to," teases Richardson. "And we also get to see more internal drama unfold amongst various members of the team, as the action is ramped up to eleven!"

"There's some pick-up from the first issue, but because of the months that have passed in real time since that issue came out, Legacy is also very much a new story with a new set-up, a new mission and a new villain," adds Furman. "Doctor Mesmer and Doctor Hoffman are still very much our main antagonists, who are now somewhat behind the scenes, pulling the strings."

Author: Stephen Jewell | Twitter: @stephenjewell

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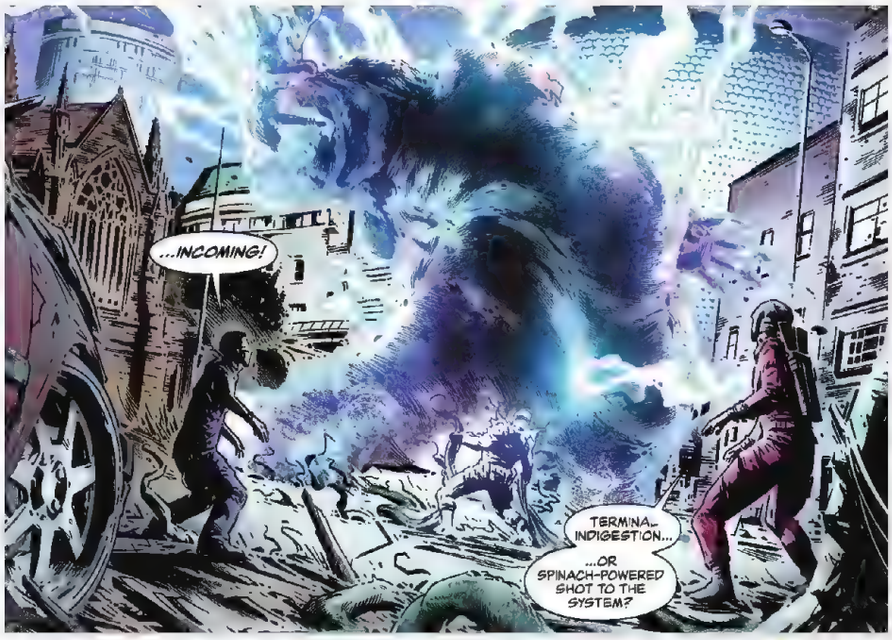

Most promisingly, The Vigilant: Legacy will boast not one two Vigilant teams. "We learn that this isn't the first time a Doctor Sin has assembled Earth's – um – mightiest heroes to combat The Blood Rapture, so The Vigilant then and The Vigilant now have a lot of inter-connective strands," continues Furman, who also recruits a character from The Nightcomers, which he, of course, penned for Scream way in 1984. "We're bringing in Beth Rogan, who actually made a cameo appearance at the end of the first issue, but this time in a bigger way, so once again there's a lot going on."

Furman welcomed the opportunity to explore the various characters in more depth. "We had more room to get under their skin, or their mask, and add more texture and shading," he says. "There's some stuff about Pete Parker and the Littluns (the aliens from his Pocket Army who hail from planet Litumus) and Thunderbolt, aka Mary Landson, that has really got me interested in both characters. We also seed things in Legacy that are going to change up the status quo – and things that we might have thought were established but maybe aren't – for both/ all. And though the line-up of the present-day Vigilant team hasn't changed, we do have that whole previous incarnation of The Vigilant to play with. And the make-up of that team has several key plot point parallels with the modern team."

With Richardson praising him as "one of those rare artists who gets my jaded, middle-aged self really excited about the medium of comics," Furman was happy to be reunited with Simon Coleby. "The gap between the first issue and Legacy has given all of us – me, Simon C. and Keith Richardson - the chance to reevaluate the characters visually, and tweak things here and there as we kind of understand them better now," he says. "So in story terms, we've gone back in and played around a little with the look of everything, but in the main Simon knocked the visuals out of the park at the first time of asking, so there was just no need for change for change's sake when it came to Legacy."

And while The Vigilant included several back-ups by numerous writers and artists, Furman has also scripted Legacy's sole additional strip. "It's a bigger main story this time around, so there's just one back-up, drawn by Jake Lynch, which is a Doctor Sin story," he reveals, alluding to the character who was radically reinvented from Pat Mills and Horacio Lalia's original Doctor Sin, which was first published in the 1979 2000 AD Annual. "It should delight old time fans, because it's a real 'spot the classic character piece, and it all has a mystical/ magical theme that ties it all together. But hopefully, it still, does something new at the same time, and helps to create a bit of a new, edgy Vigilant team dynamic, so it should be a crowd-pleaser for sure!"

Meanwhile, Sliney has illustrated the opening five pages. "They're like a self-contained story in themselves, and another crowd pleaser," continues Furman. "So we really feel like we're giving people even more bang for their buck this time."

As happened last year with the publication of Von Hoffman's Invasion, the Treasury of British Comics has also scheduled several reprint volumes that centre around numerous members of The Vigilant's increasingly large cast. "Doctor Mesmer's Revenge is out in October," says Richardson. "We also have the Best of Steel Commando Digest out this month while the first Death Wish collection was published in July."

Consequently, Furman hopes that there is some synergy between the new and old material. "I'm always looking for ways to draw the current story back to the original source material," he insists. "So in Legacy, there's one of those asterisked info caption boxes that reads 'way back in Jet #1.' To me, the classic reprint volumes and the Vigilant comics go hand in hand."

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FLINTLOCK

Lady Flintlock - Chapter One, Part Two

The story so far:

England, 1751. The golden age of the highwayman. In the rural district of Nevison one particular masked outlaw has incurred the wrath of the local gentry by frequently stopping the local coaches and stealing the valuables of their occupants. Now read on...

Written by: Steve Tanner
Artwork by: Anthony Summey
Lettering by: Bolt-01
Colour artwork by: Ian Kennedy

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THE VILLAGE OF NEVISON AND THE BACK-ROOM SNUG OF A SMALL ALE-HOUSE.
GENTLEMEN!
THERE IS A CANKER IN OUR MIDST, AND IT MUST BE REMOVED!
QUIET. INOBTRUSIVE. EXACTLY THE SORT OF PLACE WHERE PLANS ARE MADE AND PLOTS ARE HATCHED.
MY MONTH'S STIPEND - GONE! MY PERSONAGE - ASSAULTED! I HAVE BEEN HUMILIATED ON MY OWN DOORSTEP! IT REALLY IS QUITE UNACCEPTABLE!
SIR HENRY IS RIGHT, THIS CURRENT SITUATION CANNOT CONTINUE.
HOW MANY COACHES HAS THIS FELLOW INTERCEPTED NOW, ELIAS? SIX? SEVEN?
ELEVEN...
ELEVEN?!? WHAT A RIDICULOUS STATE OF AFFAIRS THIS IS BECOMING, GENTLEMEN!
THIS DAMNED HIGHWAYMAN SIMPLY CANNOT BE TOLERATED ANY LONGER. WHAT STARTED AS A MILD IRRITATION IS NOW A CONSTANT ANNOYANCE.
WHAT TO DO? PERHAPS WHEN I NEXT SIT PARLIAMENT, AND RAISE THE MATTER IN THE HOUSE?
SIR HENRY, DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS RAPSCALLION CARES WHETHER THE PROUD POPINJAYS OF WESTMINSTER DEBATE HIM?
AYE, WE NEED ACTIONS, NOT WORDS!
THIS FELLOW - THE WAY HE STEALS THE WEALTH OF THE GREAT AND THE GOOD WITHOUT IMPUNITY!

WHY YES, FROBISHER, SURELY THAT IS OUR REMIT RATHER THAN HIS!
I'M PLEASED YOU FIND THIS AMUSING, MISTER LONGSTAFF...
THEN TELL US WHAT YOU PROPOSE.
ME? WELL, I-I-
WHAT ABOUT YOU, YOUR EMINENCE? IT'S UNLIKE YOU TO KEEP CLOSED COUNSEL!
FACT, GENTLEMEN. IT IS BUT A QUESTION OF FACT. AND THE FACT IS THIS.
FOR ALL THE COACHES THAT HAVE BEEN IMPEDED THERE IS BUT ONE CONSTANT - THE COACHMEN THEMSELVES ARE NEVER ROBBED.
NO DOUBT THOSE LITTLE FISHES ATOP THE CARRIAGES ARE BEING IGNORED FOR THE BIGGER CATCHES COWERING WITHIN!
INDEED. BUT A LITTLE FISH, IF IGNORED, CAN GROW TO QUITE A FORMIDABLE PREDATOR IN ITSELF.

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AND A HUMBLE COACHMAN, WHILST A WORTHY FELLOW, IS EASILY BOUGHT.
ARE YOU SUGGESTING THE COACHMEN ARE INVOLVED, WILLIAM? THAT THIS HIGHWAYMAN IS ONE OF THEIR OWN?
I SUGGEST THERE IS *COMPLICITY*, BECAUSE THERE IS *ALWAYS* COMPLICITY - ESPECIALLY WHERE RASCALS ARE CONCERNED.
BUT TO ADDRESS OUR MOST IMMEDIATE CONCERN - SOME HUMBLE COACHMEN OF OUR OWN ARE REQUIRED. SEE TO IT.
FOR MY PART I HAVE *ALREADY* FACILITATED A FORMIDABLE PREDATOR TO BE IN OUR EMPLOY.
YOU SEE, GENTLEMEN, TO *CATCH* A RASCAL WE MUST *THINK* LIKE A RASCAL...
JING JING

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ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MR SILAS HAWKE. HE HUNTS HIGHWAYMEN.
I HAVE DISCUSSED OUR PROBLEM AT LENGTH WITH MR HAWKE, AND HE HAS... VOLUNTEERED HIS SERVICES.
I.. I AM MOST PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, MR HAWKE.
AIEE
CRUNCH
NO, SIR, THE PLEASURE IS MINE. ALL MINE.
OF THAT, I REALLY MUST ASSURE YOU.

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LADY SARAH'S MAID HAS DISAPPEARED AGAIN, MASTER GEORGE? FORGIVE MY IMPERTINENCE, BUT PERHAPS YOUR FATHER SHOULD CONSIDER HOW VALUABLE HER SERVICE IS TO US.
AFTER ALL, IT DOES SEEM THAT LADY SARAH SPENDS MOST OF HER TIME DOING HER OWN ATTENTIONS...

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INSUFFERABLE MAN! WHY DO YOU KEEP HIM?
OH, I LIKE THE FELLOW. LOYAL, TOO - YOU CAN'T SAY THAT ABOUT THE REST OF THEM. AND ROBSON DOES HAVE A POINT ABOUT THAT SCULLERY GIRL, YOU KNOW.
LIZZIE IS SARAH'S MAIDSERVANT, FATHER!
WHO I AM PAYING FOR! AT LEAST I GET MY MONEY'S WORTH WITH ROBSON! WE SHOULD PUT HER TO THE FACTORY - GET HER ON THE SHUTTLE!
PLEASE, FATHER. LET ME SPEAK TO HER, ON SARAH'S BEHALF. I'LL REMIND HER OF HER PLACE. SHE'S NEW TO SERVICE, I THINK SOMETIMES SHE FORGETS.
SHE'S FORGETTING TO LOOK AFTER SARAH! WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS WHERE SHE GETS HERSELF TO - AND I UNDERSTAND WHY WE PUT UP WITH HER ABSENCES EVEN LESS!
SOMETIMES IT SEEMS SHE'S NEVER HERE! I'M FAST LOSING MY PATIENCE WITH THE GIRL, HOWEVER FOND SARAH MAY BE OF HER!
I'LL SPEAK TO HER FATHER - I PROMISE. I'LL FIND OUT WHERE SHE GETS HERSELF TO - I DO WONDER THAT MYSELF. BUT I'M SURE IT WILL BE SOMETHING QUITE UNREMARKABLE...

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"... IT'S NOT AS IF SHE'S OUT THERE ROBBING THE COACHES!"
BLAM
I PROMISE YOU, GENTLEMEN, THAT MY OTHER PISTOLS ARE ALSO LOADED.
SO, QUICKLY NOW, REMOVE YOUR PASSENGERS!
CAN I ASK YOU TO ALIGHT PLEASE, SIR?

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THE EAGLE FLIES AGAIN

A retrospective of IPC's New Eagle comic from 1982 to 1994

The New Eagle, launched in 1982 was a piece of retroactive revisionism and nostalgia that attempted to tap into the 'father and son' market and relied heavily on the recognition of its main star, who originated in the 1950's, Dan Dare. However, this Dan was different. Due to the film rights to the original being held elsewhere, IPC had to create a work around...: the great, great, great grandson of the original, enter Daniel Dare (Dan to his friends). But this was not to be the only revision to the once great comic...

I still remember the anticipation of the launch of this comic in 1982. Comics for me up until this point were DC Thomson's stalwarts the Beano and the Dandy, which magically appeared with my mum and dad's newspaper, the Dundee Courier every week. I am not entirely sure where I first heard about this new Eagle comic, it may have been on TV or perhaps through my dad, or indeed gossip among friends at school, but this new comic was definitely on my radar. The first issue, with free Space Spinner was picked up in a local newsagent near Dundee. I don't recall actually using the Space Spinner... this was casually tossed aside, so that I could get to the contents of this glossy new comic (yes, the production values on this new 'paper' was a marked step up from its contemporaries!). So, lets dive into an overview of the first issue, over 36 years since I first read it. The front cover was by Gerry Embleton (with Free Space Spinner™) featuring Dynamic Stories Told in Exciting Photos and Pics apparently!

First up is one of 'New' Eagle's most enduring strips, Doomlord by Alan Grant & John Wagner with photography by Gary Compton. What a way to start! This felt very bizarre to me as a kid... I had peeked at photo stories in girl's comics, but this was very revolutionary at the time! There was something very disturbing about this first episode of Doomlord, more than just the creepy mask worn by the poor actor chosen to depict the Servitor from Nox! The first episode mostly takes place at night, giving it an atmosphere rarely achieved in latter episodes. The lighting has shades of film noir, and the episode is laden with lots of 'special' effects... well those that could be achieved in a darkroom, no Photoshop back then! The story has elements from Invasion of the Body Snatchers which was alien to me at the time! Alan Grant (and possibly John Wagner un-credited) does a great job of setting up the premise in 4 pages, without it being to loaded with

MIDNIGHT. A FIREBALL STREAKED DOWN OVER THE SLEEPING TOWN OF CRANBRIDGE -
A METEOR! IT'S COMING DOWN BY GALLOWS WOOD !
AN ALIEN STALKS THE EARTH
DOOMLORD
THE ONLY WITNESSES WERE P.C. BOB MURTON AND HOWARD HARVEY, A REPORTER FROM

Doomlord

exposition. We are introduced to Inspector Howard Harvey, an unlikely hero, but he is indeed the main protagonist of the story. PC Bob Murton (a reference to DC Thomson's PC Joe Murdoch perhaps?) becomes the first victim of Doomlord, as witnessed by Howard Harvey. Harvey is surprised when Murton turns up alive and well at the station later. All is not as it seems. Doomlord has taken Murton's form, and tell us that his mission is 'the annihilation of the whole human race!' End of episode one...

Next up is the obligatory football story Thunderbolt and Smokey! written by Tom 'Roy of the Rovers' Tully. The premise is relatively simple, Dedfield School is overachieving in academic terms, but has an underachieving school football team. Dedfield (surely only named so that they can be nicknamed Dead-Loss later in the strip!) suffer a humiliating loss (11-1) at the hands of rival team Ashford. Colin Dexter tries to rally the troops, but to no avail, and opposition striker Smokey Beckles fires goal after goal against Dedfield. Dexter also has

to deal with creepy games master, Ferris, who has it in for the kids (I'm really not sure this was the best career choice for him!) and even sends off Dexter under dubious circumstances. The twist in the tale, if you can call it that, is when Smokey gets 'transferred' to Dedfield School so he can get better grades. However, after an excited Dexter offers Smokey a place on the team, he turns down the team captain, as he doesn't want to play with a bunch of losers! Colin Dexter is determined to change his mind! I quite enjoyed this strip at the time as the protagonists were around the same age as me, and I was into football as a kid (my school had a similarly underachieving football team, so it felt relevant to me!). The biggest flaw in this story was the football scenes, which by the nature of the photo strip had to be staged, and therefore felt very static. There was something very working class about Thunderbolt and Smokey, the underdog(s) coming good, and sticking it to the authority, which has to be admired!

Gerry Finley-Day brings us Sgt. Streetwise, a somewhat clichéd undercover cop, 'The Police have need of men like him... men who stayed Streetwise!' states the opening graphic, in an overdramatic fashion! Never one for subtlety, Day gives us another one of his heroes with a very convenient name (See almost every strip he wrote for 2000AD). Detective Sergeant Wise of Special Undercover Operations is 'played' by a male shopping catalogue model in this photo strip, which hardly makes him inconspicuous. However, with the use of cunning disguises (in this opener, a beret and scarf!) he manages to infiltrate the London underworld, and fight crime! The Sweeney, this is not! The first episode is slight, a bungled raid on a jeweller, foiled by our eponymous hero! It's more of a scene setter for future episodes, laying out the format, and features a bit of internal police bickering and politics which will be built upon in the coming weeks. Not my favourite strip in the relaunched Eagle, it is thankfully interrupted by the new Dan Dare, more of which in a moment. It does tick the box of a cop/detective drama, but rarely surprises the reader, and becomes even more formulaic as time goes on. The last word goes to the Sergeant, "Now I've got a new identity, no-one will know me for a copper. That's the way it has to be in my job... when you have to stay STREETWISE!"

Up next was Dan Dare and the Return of the Mekon, written by Barrie Tomlinson with art by Gerry Embleton.

"FIRST UP IS ONE OF 'NEW' EAGLE'S MOST ENDURING STRIPS, DOOMLORD BY ALAN GRANT & JOHN WAGNER WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY COMPTON.

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Sgt. Streetwise
Undercover Cop

Now we are talking! Smack bang in the full colour centre-spread, the new adventures of Dan Dare. This is what we paid the entry fee for! Some stunning art from Embleton really sets the scene, the Mekon is captured by the original Dan Dare and sentenced to imprisonment in a life support capsule, enclosed in a meteor prison, set adrift in space... for ever! What could possibly go wrong? We find out on page two as, surprise, surprise, old green bonce is freed by accident, at an undetermined point in the future. We frantically scramble to the full colour back page to continue the intrigue. The Mekon forces his saviours to take him to earth, the Mekon wants nothing short of 'The Destruction of Dan Dare!". However, he is confused (as is the audience) when he discovers Dan's gravestone in Highgate Cemetery, which states that Dan Dare was 'Lost in Action' in 1950, years before his adventures and battles against the Mekon. As the Mekon states, "...even my superbrain fails to comprehend what this means...". The solution would eventually be revealed as a huge retcon for the original series, which does not really make much sense, more on that later. This is a great opener, with the art capturing the essence of Dan Dare and the Mekon, replicating Frank Hampson's original, but with a 1980's edge. The fact that this is the first drawn comic strip in the comic really shines through, no limitations on location, actors or budget here! A solid opener, but it does not really kick in until Pat Mill and John Wagner take the scriptwriting controls.

Next, we have another hand drawn strip, The Tower King by Alan Hebden with art rendered in grey tones by Spanish master, Jose Ortiz. The backstory is compressed into the first two pages and feels like a narrated title sequence to a TV show from the era. Que voice over..." It should have been the start of a new era... instead, it was the beginning of a disaster!". "Aaaaarrggh!" yells a scientist in a lab, as something goes wrong! Generation of electricity is now impossible, and humanity quickly reverts to medieval times. Groups of survivors have sprung up, and based in the Tower of London, our hero, the Tower King himself, Mick Tempest lives! He boldly states to us, the audience in a massive chunk of exposition," It's a gutted city, haunted by crazies and packs of animals gone wild. Disease, destruction and death are everywhere. But our ancestors survived without electricity, and so will we!". We then discover the 'Tube Rats', crazed people who live in the Underground, who attack the survivors, for no particular reason. There is a nice cliff-hanger, as an old steam train approaches our hero, packed with enemies, who are looking to take over the tower! This packs loads into 4 pages, and is certainly high concept, although it could have done with being spread over

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THE Collector
WELCOME. I AM KNOWN AS THE COLLECTOR!
SOME OF MY EXHIBITS MAY SEEM A LITTLE OUT OF THE ORDINARY TO YOU. BUT THEN SO, TOO, ARE THE REASONS WHY I KEEP THEM!
THERE IS A REASON FOR EVERY OBJECT BEING HERE. FOR EXAMPLE, THIS BEAUTY IS THE EYE OF A FISH. IT REMINDS ME THAT THERE IS ALWAYS MORE THAN ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS – AS YOU WILL SEE FOR YOURSELF!
EYE OF THE FISH

"WE ARE FIRMLY IN 'TALES OF THE ENTIRELY EXPECTED' HERE, WITH THE NEW EAGLE' TAKE ON THE CLASSIC TWIST IN THE TALE, ONE AND DONE THRILLER/FILLER.

three episodes, to really set the tone, however this is a great start!

Back to fumetti for the final comic outing of the issue, The Collector: Eye of the Fish by Roy Preston, Gary Compton with art by Pat Wright & Ron Smith. We are firmly in 'Tales of the Entirely Expected' here, with the New Eagle' take on the classic twist in the tale, one and done thriller/filler. Rather bizarrely, the framing sequence is drawn (expertly by IPC veteran Pat Wright) and sets up a rather flimsy premise... "Welcome, I am known as The Collector! Some of my exhibits may seem a little out of the ordinary to you, but then so, too, are the reasons why I keep them!" he continues, breaking the fourth wall, "There is a reason for every object being here. For example, this beauty is the eye of a fish. It reminds me that there is always more than one way of looking at things – as you will see for yourself!" The strip does give off an unnerving feel, not just because of the mixed drawn and photo rendering of the story. There is a strange, all too British Hammer House of Horror feel to the proceedings. The story focuses on Terry Lansberry who has gone fishing with his father. There is often an arrogant 'protagonist' in these stories, and the dad fits the bill. Yes, father and son get their comeuppance when they themselves are caught by (hand drawn) aliens. Again, the composited images on the alien spacecraft are jarring, even though they are well painted by 2000AD's Ron Smith. The sting in the tale is handled humorously, so not to give the kiddie winks nightmares, and the Collector cannot resist, saying in his denouement, "Ah, poor Mr. Lansberry. If aliens serve their meals as we do, he's really had his chips!" Oh, you are a laugh, Mr Collector! There is an amazing Alan Moore Collector strip in a future issue, but this one kind of falls flat, with any sense of menace destroyed by the weird and rather predictable ending!

There was a notable change for Dan Dare circa issue 19. The editorial in that issue told the readers that there was a new artist on Dan Dare, which was being written by Pat Mills and John Wagner. The new artist was from Dundee. Being from Dundee as well, this blew my mind. So did the art. The fully painted pages had it all, great character design, future tech, creative composition and layouts. The scripts started playing to the artist's strengths, as more aviation and spaceships appeared in the stories. It was a marked improvement, making full use of the full colour double page centre spread. A few years ago, whilst curating an exhibition about sci-fi comics, I was lucky enough to have the original art of this page on my desk to study, in advance of the exhibit install. The art was even more impressive in real life!

Back to the issues, and the New Eagle was about to undergo one of its numerous 'revamps'. We were introduced to a couple of new drawn stories, most notable of which was Scorpio by 'Ian Holland' (in reality John Wagner & Alan Grant) and illustrated by Cam Kennedy. There was also the gimmick of 3D comics with this re-launch, which lasted a few issues, and tied into an experiment terrestrial TV was trying at the time. The red and green glasses didn't quite work, and this experiment was quietly dropped after a few issues of characters needlessly pointing objects out towards the readers! Dan Dare was eventually promoted to the cover, just like his ancestor in the old Eagle! Ian Kennedy made great use of this opportunity to start the story in earnest, with some of his best work of his career appearing during this era of the comic. The biggest change however was to come after the issue cover dated 17th September 1983. The banner proclaimed "EXCITING NEWS FOR ALL READERS-INSIDE!" which send the fear into regular readers of IPC comics! There was trouble ahead!

To be continued...

Author: Phillip Vaughan | **Twitter:**@phillipbvaughan

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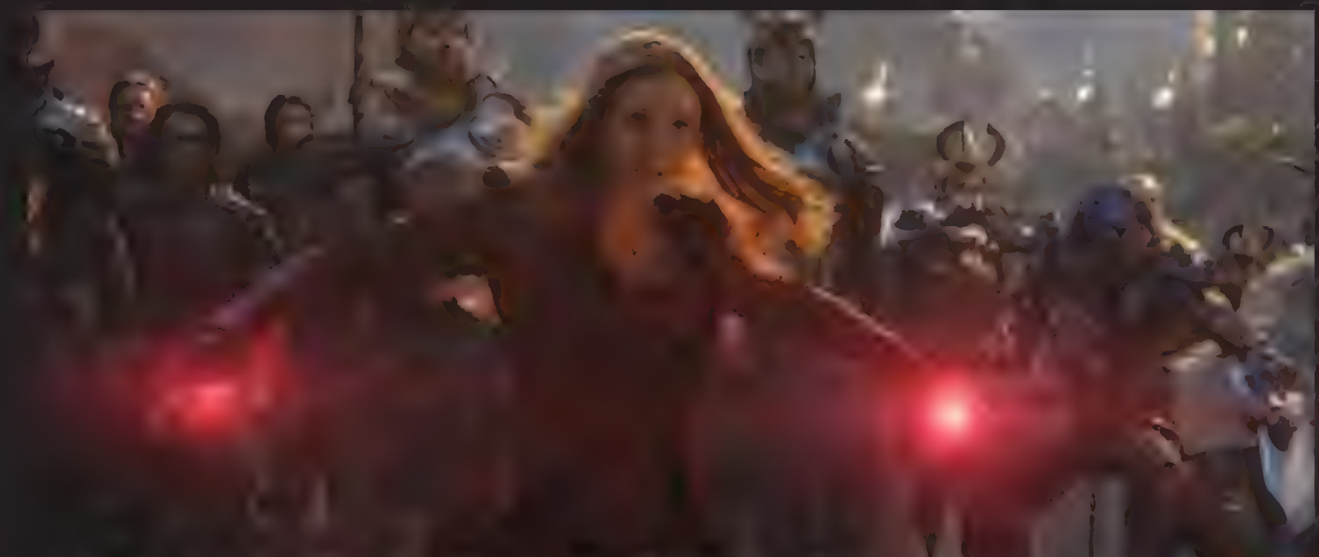

Has the bubble burst on comics related film & TV?

Fox's X-Men: Dark Phoenix has had a disappointing box office while a number of TV shows based on comic properties are ending so is this the end of the cultural dominance for film and TV based on comic series? Joel Meadows takes a look at the evidence...

It started with the announcement out of the blue, or perhaps out of the green, that DC Universe's Swamp Thing show, which started on 31 May, will not continue past its first season. Even as of this writing, it is uncertain the reason for the show's cancellation but it has opened up a can of worms. There is talk now that DC Universe will be focusing on its Titans show and so other series like spin-off Doom Patrol is in danger of not coming back. Before the Swamp Thing announcement, two other comic shows, Deadly Class from Netflix and SyFy's Happy! will not be coming back from their respective networks or streaming services. Happy!, based on the Image comic by Grant Morrison and Darick Robertson, made it to two seasons but Deadly Class, by Rick Remender and Wes Craig, only survived one season. So is this a paradigm shift?

Comics and genre have dominated TV and film since Marvel released the first Iron Man back in 2008 through Paramount but it is possible that comic properties may have reached their plateau in terms in popularity. This year saw the massive box office of Avengers: Endgame, which has made $2.7bn worldwide but Dark Phoenix, which opened the beginning of June, has only grossed $139m as of this writing. August also sees the fourth and final season of AMC's Preacher, based on Vertigo's comic by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. The disappointing box office of Dark Phoenix shows that Marvel movies that are made by other studios don't always connect with audiences.

However, we are seeing a few new shows based on comics starting: The Boys based again on a Garth Ennis co-created property, is coming to Amazon this June while CW launches Batwoman sometime this autumn. Additionally, Sony's latest Spider-man film, Far From Home, comes out in July and it is likely that the Endgame affect will give that a bit of a boost in ticket sales. But long-term even Marvel may struggle a little now that its latest phase, phase 3, has ended so it will have to start almost from scratch. The word is that the next Marvel movie will be a Black Widow one and it will be set before the first Avengers film. Captain Marvel did prove that they can engage audiences with a female superhero but that was helped by the fact it was marketed as a film that people

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> Over at DC they have had a pretty decent time since Christmas. Aquaman made just over $1bn at the box office

needed to see before they caught Avengers: Endgame and so it is uncertain how well Black Widow could do. Of course, moving forward, Marvel will have a third Guardians Of The Galaxy and a second Doctor Strange too in time.

Over at DC they have had a pretty decent time since Christmas. Aquaman made just over $1bn at the box office and so a sequel is already on the cards while Shazam! made a decent but not earth shattering $362m. The news that Robert Pattinson has been recast as Batman/ Bruce Wayne in Matt Reeves's

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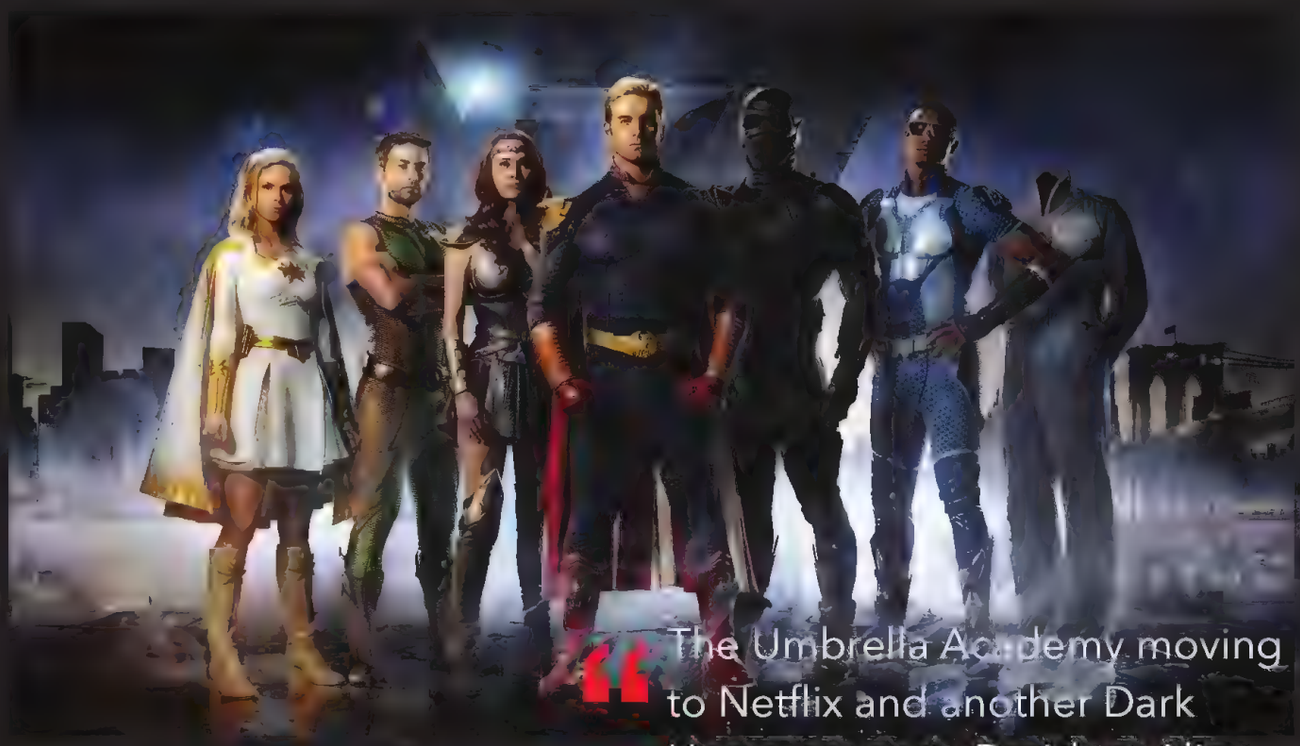

forthcoming The Batman film has garnered some interest in the property but DC don't have a cohesive strategy moving forward. Marvel could replace the Avengers characters with those who survived Endgame and it would work but DC have yet to make a Justice League film that works for audiences. Also with the rumoured departure of Henry Cavill as Superman, DC will have to recast him too and start from scratch. The other wild card is Joker, out this autumn starring Joaquin Phoenix, which DC and Warners are hoping will be a Logan-type sleeper hit. The question here is whether the character can work when he's taken out of Batman's world. Next year will see the second Wonder Woman film, Wonder Woman 1984, and a lot is riding on this being a success.

> "The Umbrella Academy moving to Netflix and another Dark Horse property Resident Alien, by Peter Hogan and Steve Parkhouse, will be seen on SyFy from next year

The one thing we haven't mentioned here is Scottish comic writer Mark Millar and his Millarworld empire. A line of successful comics like Jupiter's Legacy and The Magic Order thanks to the takeover from Netflix, many of these comics by Millar and top-flight comic artists like Frank Quitely and Rafael Albuquerque will make their way to the small screen. Millar is one of the canniest operators in the comics field so they have a good chance of doing well. Dark Horse did fairly well with Gerard Way and Gabriel Ba's The Umbrella Academy moving to Netflix and another Dark Horse property Resident Alien, by Peter Hogan and Steve Parkhouse, will be seen on SyFy from next year

So has the bubble burst on comics TV and film? A lot will depend on the success of future projects from Marvel and DC and the other companies I mentioned on the small and big screen. But it may not be the end, just a paradigm shift in the industry. As the late great screenwriter William Goldman once said in his book Adventures In The Screen Trade:"Nobody knows anything..... Not one person in the entire motion picture field knows for a certainty what's going to work. Every time out it's a guess and, if you're lucky, an educated one."

Author: Joel Meadows | **Twitter:** @joelmeadows1 | **Website:** www.tripwiremagazine.co.uk

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MILFORD-GREEN

Prettiest Village in the British Empire, 1897

By Samuel George London
& Mikael Hankonen

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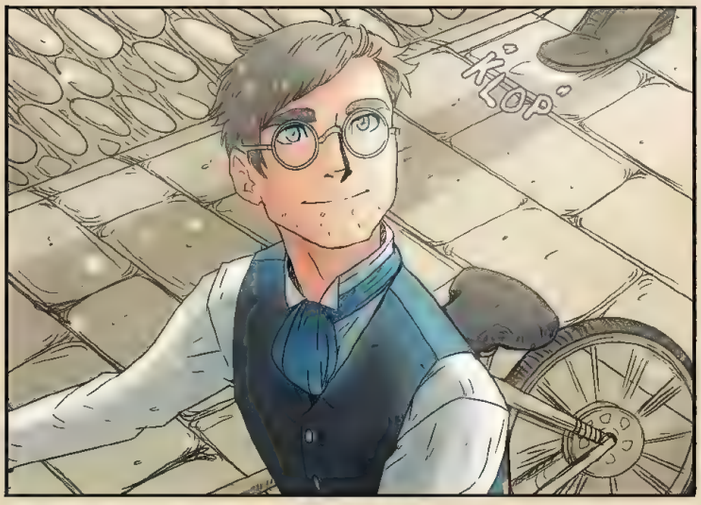

VILLAGE OF MILFORD GREEN

PUBLIC CELEBRATION

DIAMOND JUBILEE

OF

HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA

ON

SUNDAY, MONDAY & TUESDAY
JUNE 20, 21 & 22, 1897.

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 20.

The Worshipful the MAYOR (Dr Merrett) together with the Volunteers Fire Brigade and Friendly Societies will proceed to St Michael's Church when a Sermon will be preached and Collections made on behalf of the Cottage Hospital Service at 3.30p.m.

ON MONDAY, JUNE 21,

CHILDREN ATTENDING THE SUNDAY & DAY SCHOOLS

WILL PARADE THE TOWN AFTER WHICH THEY WILL BE ENTERTAINED AT

TEA IN THE MARKET SQUARE AND ADJOINING STREETS.

THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY

A BICYCLE RACE THROUGH THE VILLAGE

Commencing at Three p.m.

Followed by

DINNER and DANCING

IN THE MARKET SQUARE.

There will be stalls in the market square for the **SALE OF REFRESHMENTS AT HOME PRICES.**

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 22.

THE BELLS AT ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH WILL BE RUNG

at 11.35 a.m. and at 12 p.m.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM WILL BE SUNG

in the MARKET SQUARE to conclude the celebrations.

IN THE EVENING, THE VILLAGE HALL AND OTHER PUBLIC BUILDINGS WILL BE BRILLIANTLY ILLUMINATED.

The Illuminations will be continued on Wednesday Night.

FOR FURTHER PARTICULARS SEE FUTURE BILLS

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

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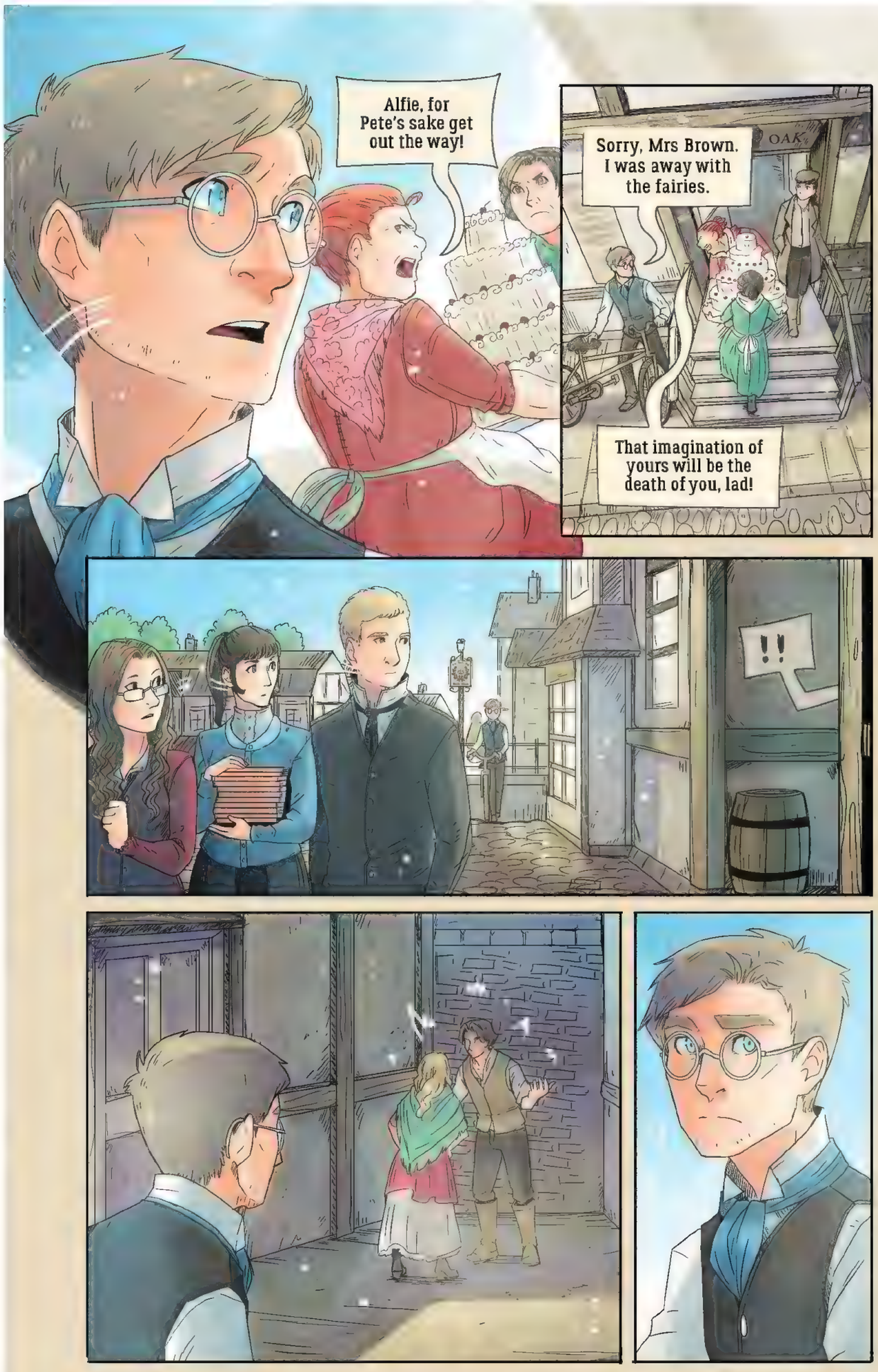
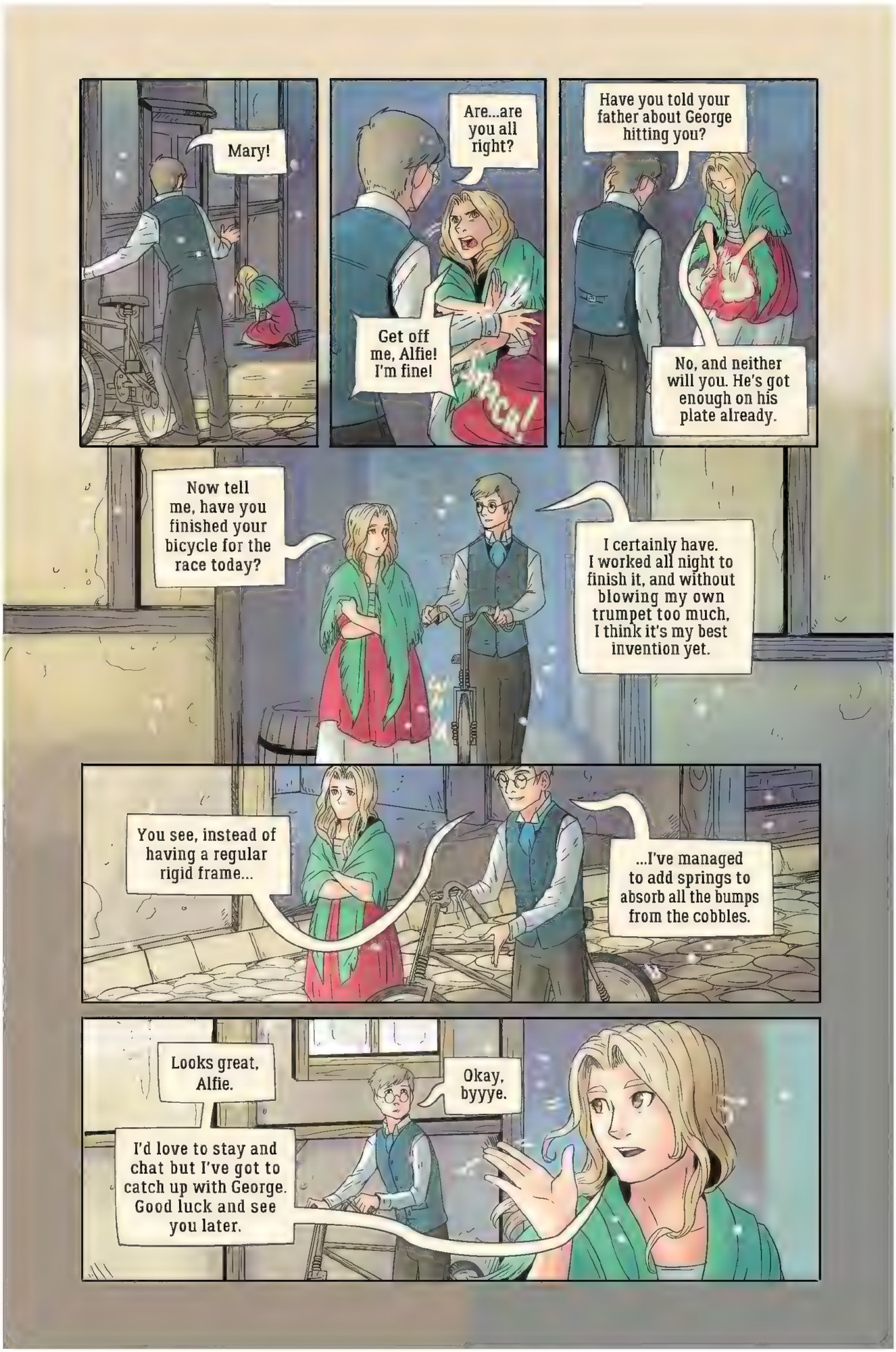

Alfie, for Pete's sake get out the way!
Sorry, Mrs Brown. I was away with the fairies.
OAK
That imagination of yours will be the death of you, lad!
!!

THUK
PHAT!!
SHU
Little tip for you, Alfie...
If you're going to hit a woman, always go for the body. That way, no one is any the wiser.
SCRUFF
SCRIFF
See you at the starting line, gibface.


Mary!
Are...are you all right?
Get off me, Alfie! I'm fine!
SMACK!
Have you told your father about George hitting you?
No, and neither will you. He's got enough on his plate already.
Now tell me, have you finished your bicycle for the race today?
I certainly have. I worked all night to finish it, and without blowing my own trumpet too much, I think it's my best invention yet.
You see, instead of having a regular rigid frame...
...I've managed to add springs to absorb all the bumps from the cobbles.
Looks great, Alfie.
Okay, byyye.
I'd love to stay and chat but I've got to catch up with George. Good luck and see you later.

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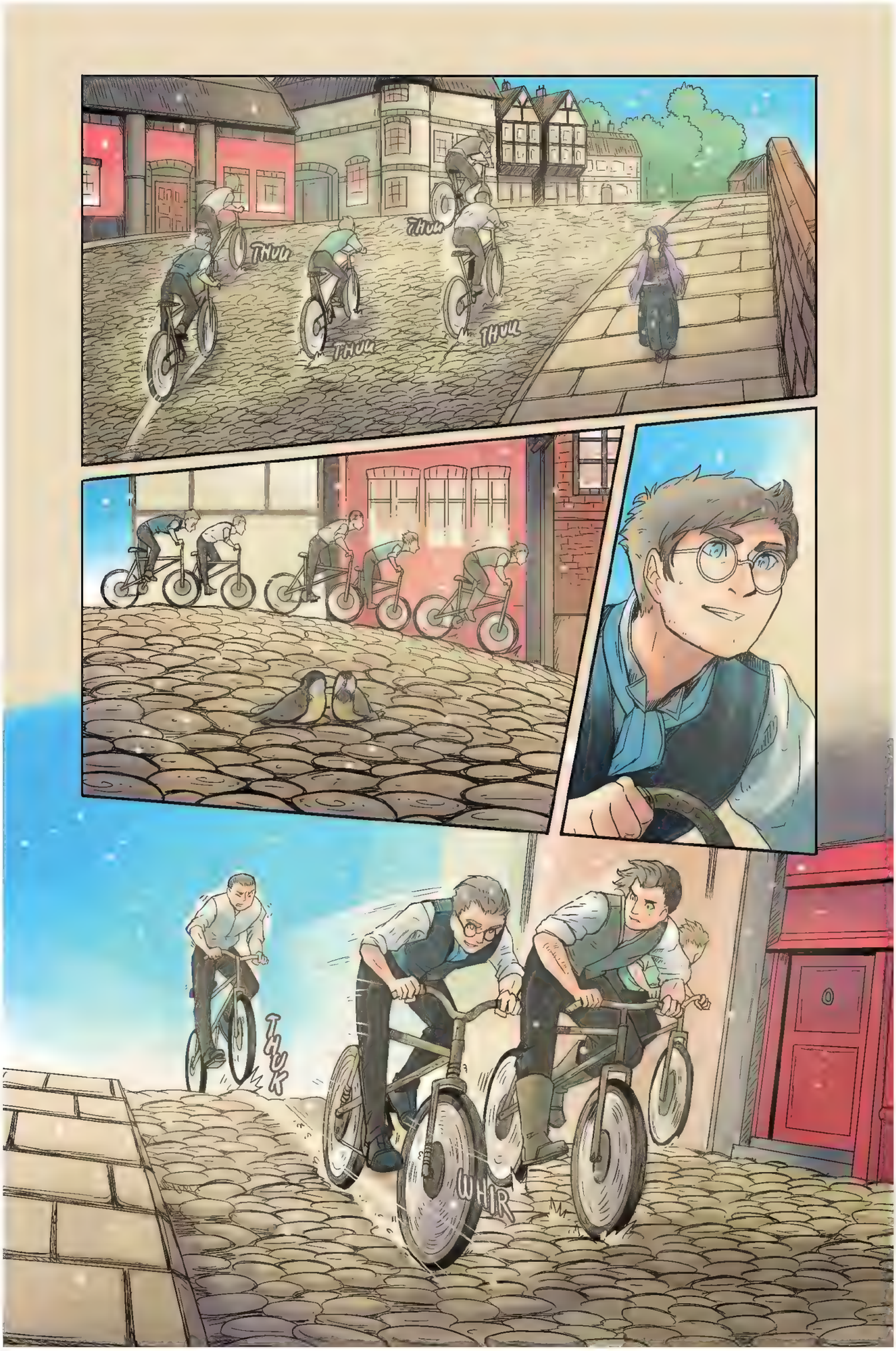

FINISH LINE
CHATTER
CHATTER
GO ON, ALFIE! YOU CAN DO IT!
WHIR WHIR WH-
-CHUCK!
WHUM
THUK!
SNAP

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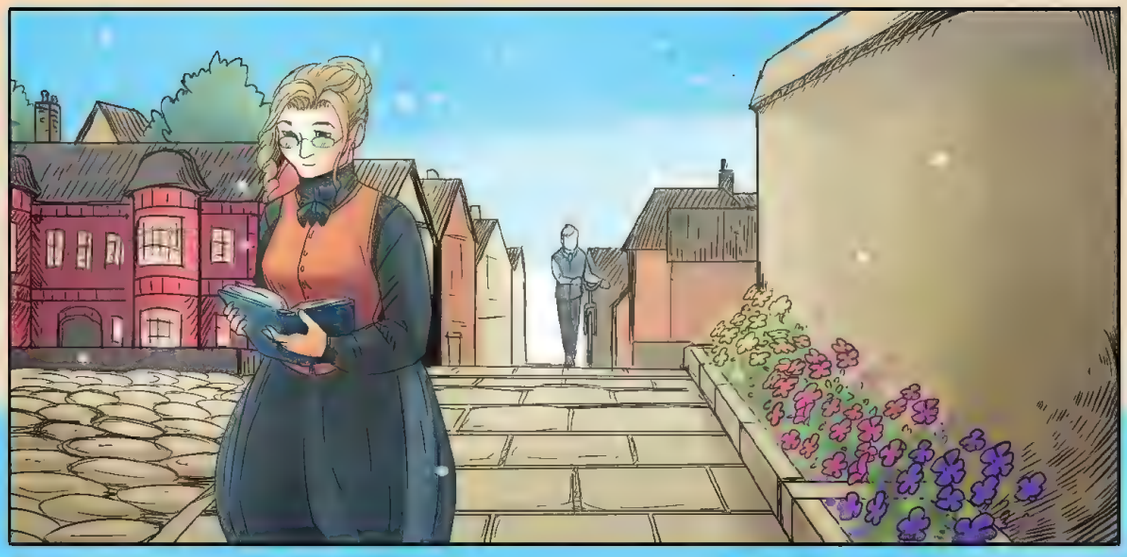

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Mary said you've got a lot on your plate at the moment.
Anything I can help you with?
Indeed, you can. You would be the ideal candidate to give me a young man's opinion on this new novel I'm working on - if that tickles your tentacles?
Really? It would be an absolute honour!
Yes. Really, Alfie.
If you wouldn't mind reading this and getting it back to me before the weekend then I'd be most appreciative.
Is it anything like the last one?
Not exactly, but it's a similar idea so I think you'll enjoy it.
Thanks again, Mr Wells. I'll be back tomorrow.
There's no rush lad, but just like last time - keep it secret, keep it safe.

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HOT SHOT HAMISH

We are at the home of Princes Park Football Club. The Scottish crowd starts to cheer as the ball is passed to the burly number nine for Princes Park. Gathering the ball the big man, who wears a shirt far too small for him, charges towards the rival goal. Three defenders bounce off him as they attempt to tackle the massive figure. Nothing can stop the player's charge. On the edge of the penalty area, the big man fires in a shot at goal. The 'keeper manages to get a hand to the ball, then wishes he hadn't as all it does is knock his bruised hand out of the way and then bulge into the back of the net. It's another goal for Hamish Balfour, a player famous for such fierce shots at goal. The fans had called those kicks the "hot-shot" and the striker became known as Hot-Shot Hamish to his fans all over the world.

Hot-Shot Hamish is a remarkable football story which first appeared in Scorcher comic in1973. When Scorcher merged into Tiger in 1974 the Hot-Shot story was retained and became a regular part of the Tiger sporting line-up. When Tiger itself finished publishing in 1985, the story transferred into Roy of the Rovers, with Hot-Shot teaming-up with Kevin "Mighty" Mouse. The latter had been a popular story in its own right and the pair made for an amazing duo on and off the football field.

As editor of Tiger, I was delighted to inherit Hot-Shot Hamish and make him a big part of the Tiger line-up. Imagine editing a comic that contained Roy of the Rovers and Hot-Shot Hamish! I took a long look at Hamish's adventures in Scorcher and noted that on occasions his fierce shots at goal would often break the back of the net and on really wild occasions could partly demolish a building.

This gave me a bit of a problem. All the sports stories in Tiger were very true to life. As editor, I wanted to keep it that way and I asked that the story could be just a little more realistic. I didn't mind the back of the net breaking

but knocking down a building was, I thought, just a little too much. So those changes were introduced.

The Hot-Shot story was brilliantly written by Fred Baker and superbly illustrated by Argentine artist Julio Schiaffino. Surprisingly, the combination of an English writer and South American artist putting together a story about a Scottish footballer worked extremely well. Each of Fred's scripts had to be translated into Spanish before being sent to the artist. This makes the whole thing even more remarkable, as Julio Schiaffino brilliantly interpreted the humour of the strip and it was as if the two contributors were sitting on opposite sides of a table, working closely together, instead of being thousands of miles apart and speaking different languages.

The Hamish story always started with these words:

Hamish Balfour was brought from a small Hebridean island to play for Princes Park, a struggling club in the Scottish First (or second!) Division.

Most of the characters Fred introduced into the story had a name prefixed by Mc or Mac. For example, a policeman might be Mr MacPlod and a butcher might be Mr McBeef.

Other popular characters in the story were the manager of Princes Park, Ian McWhacker, Hamish's eccentric daddie and Hamish's pet sheep McMutton, who would often cause mayhem on and off the football pitch. I was delighted to include Hamish, his daddie and McMutton in a brief story I wrote at the end of my recent book 'Comic Book Hero'. It was great to see those characters back in print again, if only briefly.

I was very pleased that at the height of the story's popularity I was able to arrange a meeting between Fred and Julio in my office at Kings Reach Tower in London. It was a great setting, 23 floors up, with panoramic views of the River Thames and the London skyline. It was certainly an historic occasion and it was no surprise that the two of them got on very well. They were delighted to meet after all the years of working together. To the best of my knowledge, this was the only time they met.

The Mighty Mouse story, mentioned earlier, was of course also written by Fred Baker and illustrated by Julio Schiaffino, so when the two stories merged there was no problem with contributors.

We did have a problem during the Falklands war in 1982. Britain and Argentina were at war and all postage was stopped between

Britain and Argentina. We had to arrange for Fred's scripts to be sent to Italy for translation. From there they were sent to Argentina. The artwork, when completed, was sent from Argentina to Brazil and then posted to us in London. That system worked very well and were did not lose an instalment.

One of my treasured possessions is an original Christmas card sent to the office by Julio Schiaffino. You'll see a photo of it with this article. Hamish holding Mighty Mouse surrounded by lots of the other characters in their stories. Signed by the great man himself, the greeting "Feliz Navidad!" translates as "Merry Christmas!".

Hamish also gained some international caps for Scotland. In the story, the Scottish manager was Mr McBossy, another of Fred's superb characters. Of course, Hamish playing for Scotland produced lots of surprises for the Scottish management! The first problem was finding a shirt that would fit him!

I don't think there had ever been a story like Hot-Shot Hamish and there probably never will be again. The story is a combination of football and humour, both expertly captured by writer Fred Baker. He made Hamish Balfour a very real person, full of warmth and a steely determination to succeed in any task he set himself. The continued interest in the story, after all these years, is a lasting tribute to author Fred Baker and artist Julio Schiaffino. I am proud to have been just a small part in something that is so very special!

> Most of the **characters Fred introduced** into the story had a name prefixed by Mc or Mac.

Author: Barrie Tomlinson | **Twitter:** @BarrieEditor1

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THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

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Alex Thomas takes a look at the best of **BHP Comics**

The next in our series of publisher spotlights shines a light on Scotland's BHP Comics.

Beginning life as 'Black Hearted Press' in the early 2010s, publisher Sha Nazir combined forces with writer John Farman and artist Dave Braysher to release their first book, Black Maria. As John and Dave went their separate ways, Sha continued releasing comics, under the Bold Hearted Press moniker, from his own book Laptop guy, through to zines like The Mighty Women of Science. He also began to pick up work from established names like John Wagner and Alan Grant, as well as Scottish small press stars like Gary Chudleigh (Plagued) and even big names like Frank Quitely. An integral part of the Glasgow Comic Con, Sha and his team have evolved BHP from a company who released other people's work, to publishers of their own books such as women of colour anthology Full Colour. Along the way they have become one of Scotland's most exciting indie publishers.

Rok of The Reds

The book which first brought BHP to our attention saw Judge Dredd co-creators John Wagner and Allan Grant bring us a tale of an alien warlord who comes to earth and assumes the role of a troubled footballer. It's like Roy of The Rovers meets War of the Worlds, and is a slice of classic all ages comics.

You can pick up these books and more at bhpcomics.squarespace.com

Freedom Bound

Along with Full Colour, Freedom Bound represents a fantastic example of positive publishing intent from BHP. A collection of stories about slavery in Scotland (an unlikely combination to say the least) and thanks to it's mix of historical detail and thoughtful story telling this book was introduced to Scottish schools to work as both education and entertainment.

Killtopia

As a result of it's barnstorming success on Kickstarter, Dave Cook and Craig Paton's Killtopia was picked up by BHP and helped boost it's profile to become one of our best indie comics of 2018. A super slick dystopian thriller featuring killer mechs and freedom fighers it reads like Akira meets 2000 AD but with super slick videogame aesthetic.

Rolled A One

Following the success of Killtopia, BHP started 2019 by announcing plans to re-release this gem of a book from Space Captain creator Chris Baldie (along with a re-issue of Colin Bell and Neil Slorrance's Dungeon Fun). A tale of a group of geeks bonding over table top gaming is a wonderful mix of fantasy and friendship. from one of Scotland's most exciting indie creators.

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
For more great indie comics coverage visit www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk

To The Death

Publisher: FBF Productions
Writer: Simon Furman
Artist: Geoff Senior, Jim Campbell
Price: £4.99 from Get My Comics

As you would hope in a comic with a title like 'To The Death' the action begins hot and heavy on a battle ravaged planet, as a group of ass-kicking soldiers battle alien monsters armed to the teeth with cutting edge, heavy duty weaponry.

If you like your comics to start with a bang, then you couldn't ask for more as the opening pages are a relentless series of explosions and fight scenes as the soldiers take on alien after alien to devastating effect. However there is more to this battle than simple alien destruction as the whole thing is being live streamed to a blood thirsty public back home, evoking The Hunger Games or Running Man..

As the smoke clears on the battle we are introduced to the team in more depth, from leader Aleksy to team mates Kraken, Flynn and Leone. It's your usual rag tag bunch of intergalactic soldiers, with echoes of the classic Aliens spaceship scenes when the mix of banter and bravado gets going.

As the team returns to earth, we learn about the giant corporation who runs things, the fact that the soldiers are TV stars who perform these daring feats for ratings, and also that Aleksy is about to return home to his family (who he hasn't seen for years) as a conquering hero and head into retirement. But as you can imagine, the corporation have other ideas which is the impetus for the second part of the story arc.

"Action-packed sci-fi with a satirical streak running through it's battle scarred heart."

To The Death is a fantastic slice of all action high energy sci-fi, but with a satirical edge running through it's battle scarred heart. At the beginning it's not at all subtle and starts with one hell of a bang, but the way the story begins to take shape and expand is really interesting. The concepts all feel quite familiar, but Furman expertly weaves these elements together to make something really interesting amid the action packed chaos.

Furman's long time collaborator Senior also brings his A-game to this series. The artwork has the mixed media approach of Bill Sienkiewicz, the ink splats of early Jae Lee and the high energy action of Frank Miller's 300 which creates a unique collage of destruction and makes for a potent comic with a very strong visual identity.

To The Death is a fantastically visceral high energy debut that has exceptional production values and looks set to be one of the most interesting and action-packed new British releases of the year. **AT**

Mountainhead

Publisher: IDW Publishing
Writer: John Lees
Artist: Ryan Lee
Price: £2.49 from ComiXology

The latest creator-owned series from IDW begins with father and son burglars getting more than they bargained for when a robbery goes wrong. But develops into a supernatural mystery in a remote Canadian mountain resort

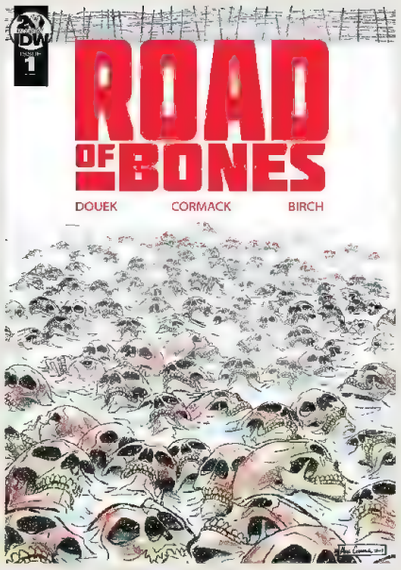
Mountainhead is one of those books which is hard to categorise. It is probably best described as a horror (and the dismembered corpse on the opening page backs that up) however, this isn't a gore and monsters book. Instead it has that kind of unsettling horror built around secrets, that makes you question everyone's motives and actions. It's the kind horror that really sticks with you.

Mountainhead feels unlike anything we've read in a while, as the story twists and turns in unexpected directions. What starts as a crime caper, becomes a small town mystery by the end, but with a supernatural undercurrent that will keep have you wondering what is going on well after you have finished it.

The artwork from Ryan Lee is also particularly dark and twisted with scratchy detail and angular lines that give it a creepy sense of style. It has that expressive darkness of Greg Capullo, but also the twisted weirdness of Mark Stafford's Lip Hook. All of which helps make the more horrific moments even more unsettling as they are both odd and outlandish in equal measure.

There is a lot going on in this first issue and there are probably a few too many open ends for our liking by the final page. There is perhaps one idea too many or 10 pages too few for it to really hit home what this series is all about. However, this is a debut that is packed full of promise and you can tell that in future issues they will come to the fore.

Mountainhead has a ton of potential for the future and is definitely a book that is worth investing in, as once we are a couple of issues in, it should be something unsettlingly good. **JB**



Road of Bones

Publisher: IDW Publishing
Writer: Rich Douek
Artist: Alex Cormack (Artist), Justin Birch (Letterer)
Price: £2.49 from ComiXology

Set in a Soviet labour camp, Roman Ivanovich Morozov and his fellow inmates look to stage an escape after being caught hoarding food for a fairytale creature. But, it turns out that the escape may just be the easy part.

Gutter Magic's Rich Douek has produced an engrossing yet brutal story. He has really done his research into Soviet Russia as the entire issue makes you question whether this is meant to be a period drama or supernatural horror.

Alex Cormack's art is every bit the equal to the writing, with a style reminiscent of Michael Lark's work on Lazarus or (more fittingly) Steve Epting's Sara. Cormack's style is a lot rougher but this works well with the books aesthetic, and his work is amazingly detailed which adds a lived in and brutal layer to the story.

Douek, Cormack and letterer Justin Birch have produced a dark and disturbing, yet genuinely intriguing tale about survival in one of the most world's most vicious environments. **JB**

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
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Griff Gristle: The Endless Voyage

Publisher: Madius Comics
Writer: Rob Jones, Michael Sambrook
Artist: Rory Donald
Price: £7 from www.madius-comics.co.uk/shop

The third volume of Madius Comic's nautical adventure picks up where volume 2, Siren's Song left off, with Griff recovering from a battle on board a cruise ship with only his memories of his beloved Betty to guide him.

Jones and Sambrook hit the ground running with yet another fun read of what is truly becoming an incredibly unique character. This issue sees the pair tie up the prior instalment's apparently unconnected story-lines to form a bigger, more epic tale. This change of pace really helps make things a little more epic with a lot of setup towards a presumed fourth issue finale. There's also a lot more focus on Griff's personality as he is offered more depth and focus showing him as much more of a broken soul instead of a Hellboy-like master of ceremony.

Meanwhile, Rory Donald's artwork remains just as gorgeous. Although it still imbues a Hellboy/BPRD style, the colour scheme seems to have becomes more distinctive here with it's blue and cooler colours really helping sell the seagoing aesthetic.

While Endless Voyage feels somewhat quieter than prior instalments, Jones, Sambrook and Donald give us another entertaining story which is starting to develop Griff into the stand-out comic series which Madius are aiming for. A must read for fans of the soon to be ending Mignola-verse. **JB**

Starside #1 -2

Publisher: Starside Comics
Writer: Dylan Klein, Lane Brettschneider
Artist: Jordan Chao
Price: $3.99 from ComiXcentral

Starside tells the story of Jack, a, quiet, decidedly everyday, young man whose life of school, friends and family is torn apart when the Earth witnesses an alien invasion.

As Jack attempts to escape these otherworldly aggressors, one wrong turn sees him taken prisoner and placed in a cell on the spaceships and taken far into the depths of space. Can Jack and the other prisoners escape, if so, where do they go?

Writers Klein and Brettschneider have produced a really enjoyable story, despite (or maybe even due to) it's quiet demeanour. The story is broken up into two parts, the pre and post invasion, which allows the opening, quiet half to introduce their protagonist properly before moving on to the more action packed second half where a faster pace helps keep you hooked.

Artist Jordan Chao, offers up some seriously gorgeous artwork in both issues of Starside and utilises a style which has a slightly European feel to it, as well as reminding us of Joshua Sherwell's work in The Kill Screen, and looks incredible with every panel.

Starside is a really captivating and beautiful comic which manages to take the focus of something as epic as an alien invasion and place it squarely on a single character as he experiences it all. **JB**

Illegal

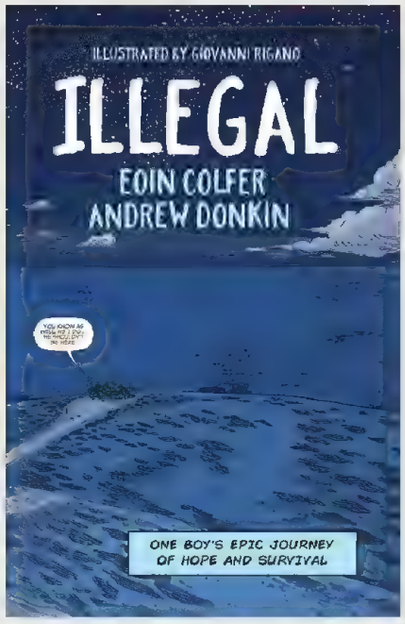
Publisher: Hodder Childrens
Writer: Andrew Donkin, Eoin Colfer
Artist: Giovanni Rigano
Price: £9.99 from Amazon

Illegal follows a pair of African brothers who are economic migrants, and their perilous journey to find a better life in Europe.

Writer Andrew Donkin and Eoin Colfer strong working relationship which they forged on the Artemis Fowl graphic novels reaps rewards here as the book is wonderfully written. It builds the brothers' story scene by scene and makes it feel as if it could be a true story even though it isn't. They perfectly balance the seriousness of the subject with a lightness which makes the story much readable and powerful.

The artwork from Artemis Fowl collaborator Rigano has the polish of a mainstream book, but with the subtlety and range of an indie. It brilliantly balances the simple quiet moments of the brothers in a boat with the epic scale of their journey.

Illegal is a poignant and powerful story, which is beautifully told. The kind of books which deserves to cross over from the niche of comics into mainstream success. **AT**



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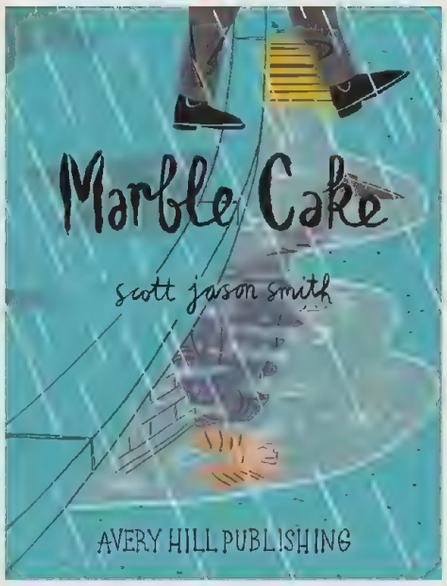
"The book is based on real moments, but none of the characters are real people"

Scott Jason Smith talks debut graphic novel **Marble Cake**

The latest release from Avery Hill, follows a group of South London residents whose lives intertwine in unique ways. We catch up with creator Jason Scott Lee to find out why he chose to celebrate these quiet moments and whether his favourite cake inspired the name.



...somewhere in the middle it'd say, you shouldn't even notice whether it's warm or cold, possibly wet...
if you're not thinking about it, like I am right it's probably just right...
enough about that! I should be thinking about what I'm going to say on this date!
shit.
shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit.
shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit.

Scott's regimented artwork is designed to mirror the repetive nature of day to day life

What inspired Marble Cake? Was it individual moments which you wanted to capture or did you have a theme you wanted to explore?
Scott Jason Smith: I guess it was individual moments that I sort of stitched together and crossed over. I knew when I came up with the idea of Tracy's story that it would be a longer piece… the other stories were originally short strip ideas I had knocking about. When I revisited Tracy's story and decided to develop it made sense to merge in the shorts I'd already written.

I set the book in London mainly because the job-hunting character uses the tube, but it's an imaginary area of London. In future I plan to create work using real places and possibly real people.

You seem to really capture the minutiae of your characters' worlds, were any of them based on real people? Or real moments?
SJS: Much of the content and dialogue is stuff I've overheard or witnessed, so yeah, a lot of the book is based on real moments, but none of the characters are real people. My favourite characters are probably the two boys that wander about annoying people, so if I were to revisit any characters it'd most likely be them, although not in main roles, just floating around in the background.

Your artwork has a regimented feel, was that an intentional style choice?
SJS: I like a six-panel grid and I wanted to keep the layout quite rigid to symbolize the repetitiveness of going to work, going to the shops, watching TV etc. The full-page spreads allow the book to breath every now and then.

Is this your first graphic novel? And what other work can we see of yours?
SJS: I used to put out photocopied mini comics years ago. I stopped self-publishing a while back (although I reckon I'll start up again) and have since just submitted the odd strip to an anthology or posted them on my website. So, to see more visit scottjasonsmith.com, there's some comics on there.

And finally, what is your favourite type of cake? Marble cake also?
SJS: Probably lemon drizzle or carrot cake, a slice of each of those and that's 2 of your 5 a day! But yeah, the title came from the cake making but is also relates to the slice of life feel to the book and the mix of characters.

You can purchase Marble Cake from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com

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"Having a full LGBT team means characters have a better chance to be represented"

Joe Glass on the importance of superhero diversity in **The Pride**

Joe Glass' superhero series the Pride has been a shining light in the small press scene for its positive representation of LGBTQ characters, (and because it's a really fun capes adventure in the vein of Claremont and Byrne's X-Men). However, The Pride have now been recruited by ComiXology to be part of their Originals stable and with that comes a new adventure and some new costumes. We catch up with Joe to find out more about their step up to the big league of indie superheroes!

For those new to the world of The Pride, tell us a bit about them?
Joe Glass: The Pride is a superhero team series action adventure just like Avengers or Justice League. But with the soap opera elements of classic X-men and one twist – all the characters are LGBTQ+ or allies. The series focuses on superhero action and fun in an accessible and open way that doesn't ignore topics that are LGBTQ+ in nature. So more fans can get the chance to see themselves in the medium they love.

Was it important for you to create a team which represents the LGBT community rather than just have a token member of a larger team?
JG: Absolutely! One of the problems in mainstream superhero comics when handling LGBTQ+ characters or topics is: a) the weight of the whole aspect tends to get put on a single character, and no single character can be everything for everyone; and b) often vanish once the 'gay story'

HONEY, I'VE BEEN NEW YORK TO BE FINE
SERIOUSLY, IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S MONSTERS HIDING BEHIND EVERY BUILDING!
AHH!
THE TRUTH IS THAT CAN BE JUST WHEN THE MONSTERS REALLY COME AFTER YOU
SCENT WHEN EVERYONE CAN SEE

The new season sees a mysterious villain targeting fans of pop star Siren

has been told or become background scene dressing.

Having a full team means the characters can cover more ground, there's more options and as many as possible have a chance to be seen/represented.

How has the book been embraced by the LGBT community?

JG: By and large, it's been accepted well! People have been happy to see something like this out there. Certainly every con I meet people who are elated to see a joyfully queer, fun superhero story available, and one with such a diverse range of characters and LGBTQ+ voices and representations. But even with such a wide range, we can't be everything for everyone – the community is so incredibly diverse, nine main cast members will never cover everything.

But we'll keep trying, learning and pushing further for better representation of more people.

The new 'season' is part of comiXology Originals, can you tell is how that came about?

JG: ComiXology have always been super supportive of The Pride ever since the first days of putting the comic up on Submit. Even back then, they included the title in sales and had me appear on panels in SDCC and NYCC when I was there, so they really went out of their way to support and nurture The Pride and LGBTQ+ comics

PERHAPS... PERHAPS WE SHOULD CONSIDER REPLACEMENTS--
FABS!
BAD WORDING, SORRY! NOT 'REPLACEMENTS', BUT, I DUNNO... 'SUBSTITUTE' MEMBERS?
AUXILIARY MEMBERS?
MAYBE NOW ISN'T THE TIME...
PERHAPS EVEN WITH THEM WE WEREN'T ENOUGH TO FACE THE PROBLEMS THE WORLD WILL THROW AT US.
I'LL BE HONEST, I'D ALREADY BEEN THINKING OF IT FOR A WHILE. THE WORLD SEEMS MORE DANGEROUS EVERY DAY.
IT COULDN'T HURT TO HAVE MORE HEROES TO HELP. MAYBE FILL SOME OF THE POWERSET GAPS WE HAVE AT THE MOMENT.
I ORGINALLY PUT THIS TEAM TOGETHER TO BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.
WE DID A GOOD JOB, BUT THAT JOB ISN'T OVER. THERE'S STILL MORE TO DO.

The aftermath of Season 1's epic conclusion means The Pride are recruiting new members

for ages, long before the big upgrade to Originals and other publishers. They've really thrown their all into making The Pride bigger than ever before with its step up to Originals, so it's really been amazing of them.

What can fans look forward to in new issues

JG: We're gonna see a host of new characters, bringing in more new elements of the community than ever before. We're also tackling tough topics like being outed, transphobia in the media and body dysmorphia disorders. Aside from that, we can expect some crazy action and huge obstacles from nuclear meltdowns, superstar divas and even the odd kaiju.

You've had a variety of artists on so far, are you hoping to get more continuity going forward?

JG: Going forward in this season we have one set art team. If we get The Pride Adventures up and running again, I'd like to keep it somewhere for a range of creators to take part on small adventures. But yeah, for now, we're going to keep things with our core creative team of Cem Iroz, Mark Dale and Mike Stock for this series.

Which superhero books inspired the Pride? And which LGBT superhero books you would recommend?

JG: Avengers, Justice League and X-Men, have been a huge inspiration on The Pride for sure. Especially seeing as the core idea of The Pride is showing that we (the LGBTQ+ community) can be the same kind of heroes as their straight counterparts. People looking for similar LGBTQ+ superhero experiences, grab Iceman, West Coast Avengers and Young Avengers.

The Pride Season 1 and 2, and The Pride Adventures are available now from comiXology.co.uk.

Ignited

Publisher: Humanoids/H1 Comics
Writer: Mark Waid, Kwanza Osajefo
Artist: Phil Briones
Price: £2.49 from ComiXology

Marvel legend Mark Waid is one of the most prolific writers in comics. For this new release from Humanoids' H1 imprint he teams up with Kwanza Osajefo to bring a unique superhero infused look to the powerful subject of high school shootings.

The kids of Phoenix high are coming back after a school shooting, amid talks of armed teachers and increased security. Some students take on the role of masked pranksters, take over the school emergency system and give the staff food poisoning as a protest, however they get more than they bargained for when a militia of armed parents turn up.

You couldn't ask for a better writer than Waid for Ignited as he brings his amazing 'everyman' voice to the series, that was so effective on teh recent Archie reboot. He and Osajefo make the high schoolers feel both contemporary but also very real and also the obvious anti gun sentiments more palatable and less preachy than they might otherwise have been.

Artist Phil Briones brings a slick style that would not feel out place in a big two book and reminded us Mark Bagley's work on Ultimate Spider-Man, as he mixes classic high school scenes with slick super powered debuts. He also handles emotive flashbacks to the shooting carefully, which are told using a red colour wash and gunfire lettering which almost covers up the panel to emphasis the trauma.

With a final twist which poses plenty of questions about of the shooting, Ignited is a really exciting take on a superhero high school story, with a very relevant and contemporary angle. **AT**

Counterfeit Girl

Publisher: Rebellion Publishing
Writer: Peter Milligan
Artist: Rufus Dayglo, Dom Regan
Price: £9.99 from Amazon

As you would expect in a dystopian tale from 2000 AD, Counterfeit Girl is based in a futuristic mega city, where giant corporations rule the world and thieves steal people's identity for nefarious reasons.

Step forward Libra Kelly (Or is it Lulu Fun, or is it Sybil Mann?) a 'simmer' or backstreet identify thief who gets infected by a sentient virus and has a bounty put on her head by the all powerful Albion Corporation.

Set in a gloriously anarchic world it feels fresh and new, but quintessentially 2000 AD. The story nips along at a fantastic pace, and even though it retains the prog structure, there is still enough room for the story to twist and turn in unexpected directions.

Visually, Dayglo is on top form, with panels packed full of intricate tech, outlandish characters and explosions of neon colour that are more acid house than dingy Goth dystopia.

With everyone looking for that next iconic female lead, then Counterfeit Girl, might just be the real deal for 2000 AD! **AT**

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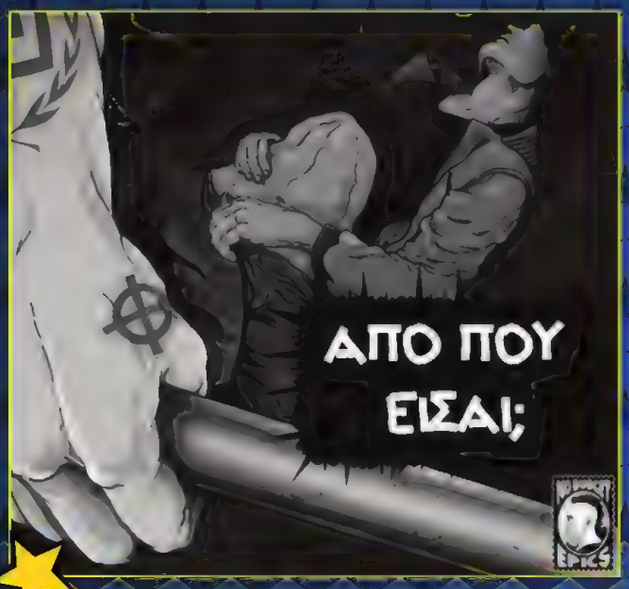
EURO SCENE

EUROPEAN COMIC REVIEWS



Title: The Black Map of Athens
Artist: Various
Author: Various
Publisher: The Rosa Luxembourg Foundation

The Rosa Luxembourg Foundation have an office in Athens Greece, which is currently running one of the most inspirational and politically charged cartoons in Europe.

The Black Map of Athens is a series of cartoons set out on a map of Athens with each one marked by an orange cross. Cross Them Out are cartoons drawn by artists, such as Tasos Anastasiou, depicting an incident involving a refugee "designed to pinpoint and highlight the unseen criminality related to racist attacks in the public space."

The cartoons come with a title and short description of the attack in question. They are available in both Greek and English and offer people the chance to contact them to record an attack if they have been a witness or victim.

It is a fantastic initiative, and the wide range of contributing artists involved in the publication gives Cross Them Out a wonderfully artistic variation, and a great window into the Greek comic arts scene.

Title: La Revolte Des Terres
Artist: Marion Mousse
Author: Koza
Publisher: Casterman

La Revolte Des Terres (The Underground Revolt) is a graphic novel produced by the collaboration of the French artist Marion Mousse and writer Stéphane Koza. Released originally in 2017, this comic is set between three time periods.

The present day aspect is set in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and follows a woman searching for her brother. As the story develops it flashes back between a strike that took place in the mining area of Nord-Pas-de-Calais in 1941 and the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

We begin with the distressing scenes of a character searching for a lost relative amidst the brutal reality of Nazi concentration camps. In this short graphic novel, Koza and Mousse develop the plot quickly whilst building a strong storyline.

The stark detail of Mousse's illustrations, which use black and white colouring with a watercolour effect, depicts the grim nature of war and its' impact on people's lives majestically. Koza uses words and dialogue intelligently, regularly leaving several without any dialogue, setting the tone nicely.

Our main protagonist is Ferdinand, a miner, who is trying to keep a low profile but, in doing so, gets himself mixed up in a terrible situation and finds himself in prison.

Ferdinand has been wronged by someone from his village, and we follow his journey in this historical thriller as he tries to survive and clear his name against the backdrop of World War Two.

Title: La main à cinq doigts
(The 5 Fingered Hand)
Artist: José Parrondo
Author: José Parrondo
Publisher: L'Association

José Parrondo's The Five Fingered Hand is a very short (54 pages) and surreal graphic novel that lets us in to the world of Parrondo's imaginary hand, which leads an intriguing life of its own.

The hand interacts with its neighbours, takes a trip to the train station, and even goes to a football match. What is intriguing about this comic is that when you are reading you feel like some of the sequences could be stand alone comic strips but at the same time, without the context of the whole story, they can feel strangely isolated.

La Main à Cinq Doigts is a clever construction as it succeeds in giving the narrative many levels. The black and white style allows the reader to consider the story, while the extra layer adds detail to supplement the simple drawing style of lined pen and ink.

La main à cinq doigts is an entertaining comic, which asks philosophical questions in the context of a silly story. It's exactly how comics should be - fun, wacky and brief!

Artist: Mateo Guerrero
Author: Sylvain Runberg
Colourist: Javi Montes
Publisher: Europe Comics

Europe Comics are one of the main outlets for small creators on the continent translating their into English for the British and North American markets.

Jakob Kayne, La Isabela, is one of their releases for May 2019. It is a period drama in which Kayne, a hippocrat and healer-alchemist, is on a mission to save Victoria from a deadly illness. She is trapped in the besieged city of La Isabela, on the Island of Hispaniola.

Kayne uses his powers to penetrate the walls of the fortified capital whilst it is under siege from the Omeykhims. They are desperate to capture the city's hidden treasures from the island's inhabitants, The Inquisitors.

This is a colourful and graphically detailed comic that uses overlapping panels to frame large, dramatic scenes. The authors differentiate between narration and action by utlising colour-coded text boxes and speech bubbles making it easy to follow.

Jakob Kayne I is a loved-charged, periodical drama with mystical powers, action scenes and a double-layered storyline. This is book one and so there's sure to be another exciting installment available for avid fans soon.

Title: Second Generation
Author and artist: Michel Kichka
Publisher: Europe Comics

Michel Kichka's autobiographical tale of how he and his family came to terms with their experience of the holocaust or shoah, as it is known in Hebrew, is both insightful and informative.

Rather than dealing with the facts of the Holocaust itself, Kichka's provides a window into the lives of the thousands of families who went through the genocide and its aftermath by looking it at from within his own family, focusing particularly on his late father.

His artwork somehow manages to give this rather compelling graphic novel a lighter touch than other editions that have dealt with the Holocaust. Consequently, as a reader, you are able to engage with both the survivor (Kichka's father) and the suffering of his family, who found it hard to broach the subject in order to learn more about their father's life.

Inspired by Maus, it is a refreshingly different approach to documenting the suffering the Holocaust caused and it should be at the top the reading list for anybody interested in the subject.

The story is nicely split into manageable chapters and you can clearly see the influence of Gaston, the Israeli's favourite Belgian comic growing up.

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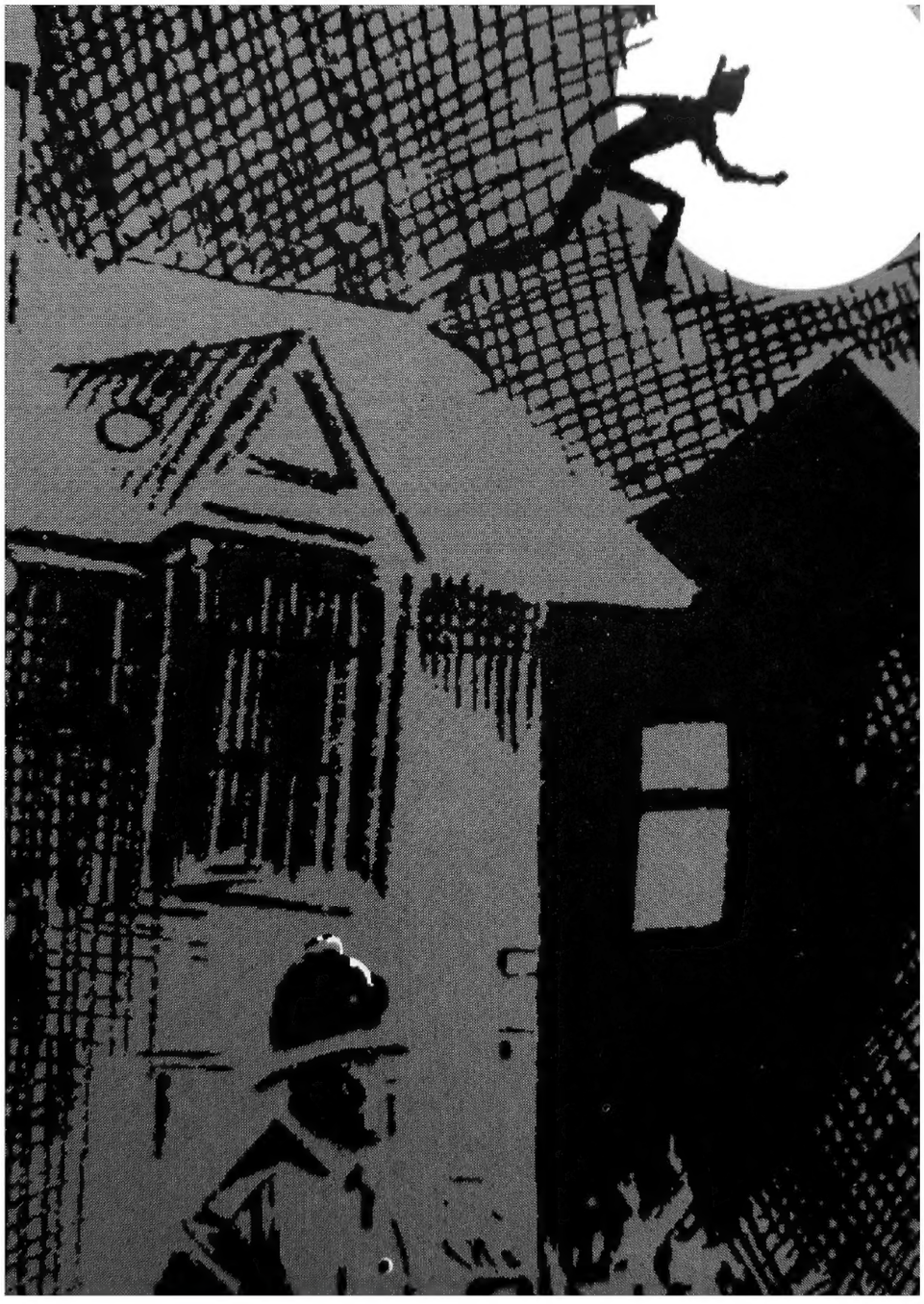
The Leopard from LIME STREET

With Rebellion's second volume of collected strips now available, the 'Beast of Selbridge' is truly back. For some he never really went away.

The first thing that hits you is that title logo. Against some very strong contemporary competition, it remains one of the very best, instantly conjuring up a mixture of danger and dynamism, mystery and fun. Then you're hurled straight into the action as 'the whole spine-chilling business' begins and you're introduced to 13 year old Billy Farmer, boy orphan, in the throes of being bullied again. But not for much longer...



'Tell your pals Buster is the comic with the Leopard Boy in!'

Beginning in Buster dated 27th March 1976, The Leopard From Lime Street would go on to become one of the most fondly remembered UK comic adventure strips, its arrival only increasing the lure of a title that was already proving to be one of the strongest in the Fleetway/IPC line. Ultimately going on to last just short of a mightily impressive 40 years, Buster, at this point in its journey, had already merged with a selection of less successful stablemates such as Jet, Cor!! and Monster Fun. Along with new humour launch Crowjak, the Crime Busting Crow, the brand new adventures of Billy Farmer were thus complementing an already strong lineup, with IPC's humour and adventure strip mix finding room for Marney the Fox, Chalky, Pete's Pocket Army, Ivor Lott and Tony Broke and (subsumed from previous home Jet) Ken Reid's classic Faceache.

The first four page instalment introduced us to 'plucky little chap' Billy Farmer, dusting himself off after yet another run in with school bully Moggsy and the usual gang of sycophants. Both a conscientious student and keen photographer, Billy pays a visit to Professor Jarman's Zoological Institute and Gardens, hoping to capture some interesting photographs for the school magazine. He's accidentally scratched by a runaway leopard, and although no harm appears to be done, Professor Jarman insists that he take Billy home, informing him that the leopard involved was suffering from a rare disease and being treated with a brand new type of experimental radioactive serum. Sure enough, once home, Billy soon finds himself possessed with new found strength, the speed and agility of a jungle cat and increased night-time vision. After stumbling across his old school pantomime outfit (and painting on some well placed leopard spots) Billy hits upon an idea, and thus the Leopard from Lime Street is born, effortlessly bounding from bedroom window to nearby tree and on his very first mission; to track down the notorious local burglar known as Cat-Man and take some photographs of him to sell to the local newspaper.

Let's address that most obvious and repeated criticism levelled at the strip straight away. Adopting the powers and abilities of a 'radioactive' endowed creature may be one noticeable nod towards a particular 'super-heroic' storyline, yet to then have the main protagonist sell news photos to an antagonistic newspaper editor (in this instance Thaddeus Clegg, skinflint news editor of the local rag the 'Selbridge Sun') takes the 'homage' to almost cringeworthy levels. However, to dismiss Leopard as wholly derivative would be a criminal injustice as it remains one of the real gems of UK adventure strips, produced by one of UK comics truly brilliant creative teams.

'One of the strangest and most exciting stories ever told!'

Writer Tom Tully had enjoyed a successful comics career dating back to the early 1960's working on Heros the Spartan with legendary artist Frank Bellamy for the original Eagle. Subsequent writing credits read like a 'who's who' of long revered UK strips, Janus Stark, Kelly's Eye, Adam Eterno and the Steel Claw among them, and by the time of Leopard he'd already embarked on what would become a long running stint on Roy of the Rovers. As well as going on to write classic strips such as

Johnny Red for Battle, new titles such as 2000AD would also utilise his skills, becoming known for futuristic sports strips such as Harlem Heroes and Inferno as well as working alongside Dave Gibbons on the 'Servant of Evil' storyline for Dan Dare.

With Mike Western's layouts complemented by Eric Bradbury's inking, the strip was also graced with two of the very best visual storytellers in the business. Western's work was instantly recognisable to a whole generation of UK comic readers from a multitude of wondrous covers he produced for IPC over many years, as well as working with Tully on fondly-remembered strips such as the Wild Wonders. He was also about to produce some career defining work alongside John Wagner on Darkie's Mob in Battle. Bradbury was yet another master draughtsman, familiar to many from a myriad of great UK strips including Mytek the Mighty, House of Dolmann, and the magnificently macabre Cursitor Doom, with further fine work ahead of him for '80's title Scream! With Bradbury working over Western's layouts the Leopard strip seemed lifted to a completely new level, now set against the brooding terraced streets, chimney-stacks, rows of shops and derelict bomb-sites of Selbridge,

Against this backdrop Tully moulds his script around the template he'd use to great effect in later strips such as The Mind of Wolfie Smith where an underprivileged and somewhat unloved 'normal' lad somehow becomes possessed with some 'special' power. Billy attends Selbridge Secondary School having failed at his '11 plus' exam, he's bullied and 'not strong enough to punch his way out of a paper bag', he's an orphan, with a violent uncle as a guardian. If Tully's characterisation seems to veer off at times into stereotypical working class tropes ('…hurry up and get me supper ready woman I'm off down the working men's club…) it's worth bearing in mind that such portrayals were much nearer the mark in 1976 than they seem now. Seeing Billy on the receiving end of actual physical violence from his uncle (… and I still owes yer one for knocking me over the other day…take that!!) might seem shocking now but was written in the expectation that whole swathes of Buster's young readership might actually empathise. This in itself throws into sharp contrast one huge difference between the 'big two' in the UK comics industry at the time; read and loved as they both were by thousands of readers, DC Thomson and IPC were nevertheless competitors in a tight marketplace. If at times they'd ape each others successes, it seemed to many onlookers they actively sought, and indeed had, distinct editorial values. If for some it's a difference in values that's blurred or even difficult to explain, the realm of adventure strips and the harsher reality of Billy Farmer's world to that of Billy the Cat and Katie should.

From the very first four page instalment it's clear that here was something just that little bit special, and newly armed with kitsch accessories such as his home made grappling claw (I've fixed that claw-like ornament I found on the old fire-tongs to one end of the chord…let's see how it works) Billy's high octane adventures would keep up the fast pace for many years to come. At whatever point readers might stumble across this strip, they'd be instantly along for the ride, caught up in Billy's world and drawn in by the sheer pace of the antics. Yet for me there remains throughout a kind of tension, a frisson that comes through particularly in the visuals, which gives the strip its unique flavour and seems to lift it to a higher level. Undoubtedly one of those parts, never failing to impress week after week, was that sumptuous title logo, capturing the imagination all over again and whetting the appetite for what was to follow.

As a regular reader of the strip, you simply didn't know what to expect next. Billy would leap from tangling with the Cat-Man and trying to get the better of Thaddeus Clegg, before rescuing a beautiful television starlet, kidnapped as she films her show in town ('…what a load of rubbish. This is one series that I won't be watching, even if we had a telly'). He gets falsely accused of arson before going after a circus acrobat who's been impersonating the increasingly notorious 'Beast of Selbridge'. Whatever the madcap scenario,

the exploits of Billy Farmer seemed a refreshing change from the other action/adventure strips of the time, and it was easy taking to a character who'd used the earnings from his exploits as a deposit for a brand new colour tv set for a downtrodden aunt. Yes, there's fun, thrills, excitement and oddball antics, but always that sense of danger, that edge, that Mike Western and Eric Bradbury could conjure up so effortlessly. Perhaps it's the script working at odds with those sometimes sombre, brooding visuals that gives the strip so much of its chemistry and energy. As a very young child yet to learn to read properly, the stellar artwork of Francisco Lopez always seemed to give off an eerie and foreboding atmosphere, with intrigue or danger forever lurking around the corner, even at moments when the script didn't necessarily call for it. Leopard often gave off that exact same feel, that sharp contrast between word and image creating that magical 'third' element that's only possible through comics. Perhaps here, with the city-blocks of a New York or a Gotham replaced by the more down to earth rooftops of Selbridge, that sense of danger and foreboding seemed that little bit more real too?

'And those eyes, all green, a-an glowin'...he...he ain't 'uman!'

All of which isn't to undermine just how much fun the strip was. A huge part of that fun was seeing how Billy's powers and persona evolved over time, and what merely starts off with the enhanced reflexes and increased speed (...you idiot, there's no one there! You're shooting at shadows!) is steadily developed over time. His enhanced strength becomes more prominent; the initial 'punch the air' moment as he effortlessly turns the tables and fells his violent Uncle merely the precursor to inevitable retribution against school bully Moggsy. Part of the character's appeal comes from his own coming to terms with the sudden changes and seeing him learning the ropes as he goes along; accidentally showing off some new found ability ('Billy kept forgetting that he now possessed the strength and agility of a leopard') and leaping down stairs or over eight foot high walls, even running high speed down Selbridge high street excitedly carrying that newly-purchased, extremely heavy colour telly. Introducing himself to 'first foe' Cat-Man (I'm the Leopard from Lime Street, mate!) he's perhaps foolishly narrowing down the scope needed for any search into unlocking his secret identity, yet such charming naiveté remains part of the strips appeal. Billy would undergo even stranger changes as the weeks progressed; gaining the ability to roar like a leopard, grow elongated canine teeth and even develop a penchant for ultra rare meat. Our intrepid young hero always seems to take each and every startling change in his stride (... something else I'll have to watch - my eyes are turning green, beginning to glow) yet there's also the times when Billy, quite apart from naturally being unable to resist getting his own back on the bullies, does indeed seem to get more feral in nature, the wilder more animalistic nature of his personality taking more of a hold (Start talking...before I get to work with this claw!)

While fans of Crowjak the Crime-Busting Crow may have to remain patient a while longer, Leopard aficionados are currently spoilt rotten with Rebellion's second volume of collected strips released in June. Following up an excellent first volume released in April 2017, each original classic strip is again lovingly reprinted in order, enabling readers to follow the whole 'spine chilling business' as it originally unfolded. The very fact that, with the wealth of material now at their disposal, Rebellion are presenting a second volume so quickly speaks for itself, not just for the quality of the original material and the creators involved but for the warmth and affection (and interest) still held for the strip and the character today. It seemed almost inevitable that Billy Farmer be chosen as one of the small handful of characters re-presented to the world in 2018's excellent Vigilant by Simon Furman and Simon Coleby, offering updated versions of himself and other well-remembered British adventure strip characters such as Adam Eterno and the Steel Commando to a new generation of readers. Yet such fresh takes on beloved characters also undoubtedly appeals to fans of the original strips too who get a kick from seeing characters from the past returning. In such a milieu, is the time ripe also for more of Billy's solo adventures? Just what did happen next, between then and now, to a character that seemed so much of his time, at that time? What of the late teenage/early twenties Billy? Can a leopard change its spots?

Whatever might lie in wait for our feline chum, the 'Beast of Selbridge' remains very much a part of the UK comics landscape, enjoying as high a profile now as he's ever had. What a huge testament to the three magicians who wove their creative magic all those years ago.

And did I mention that title logo?

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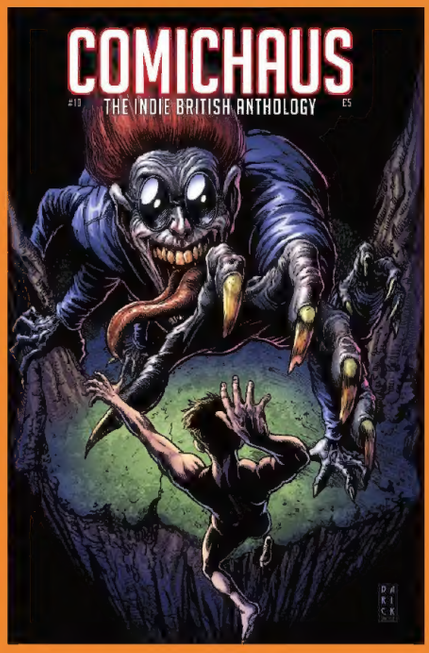

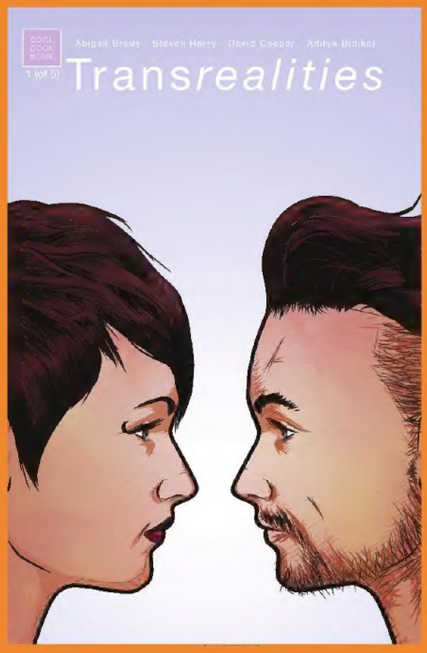

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